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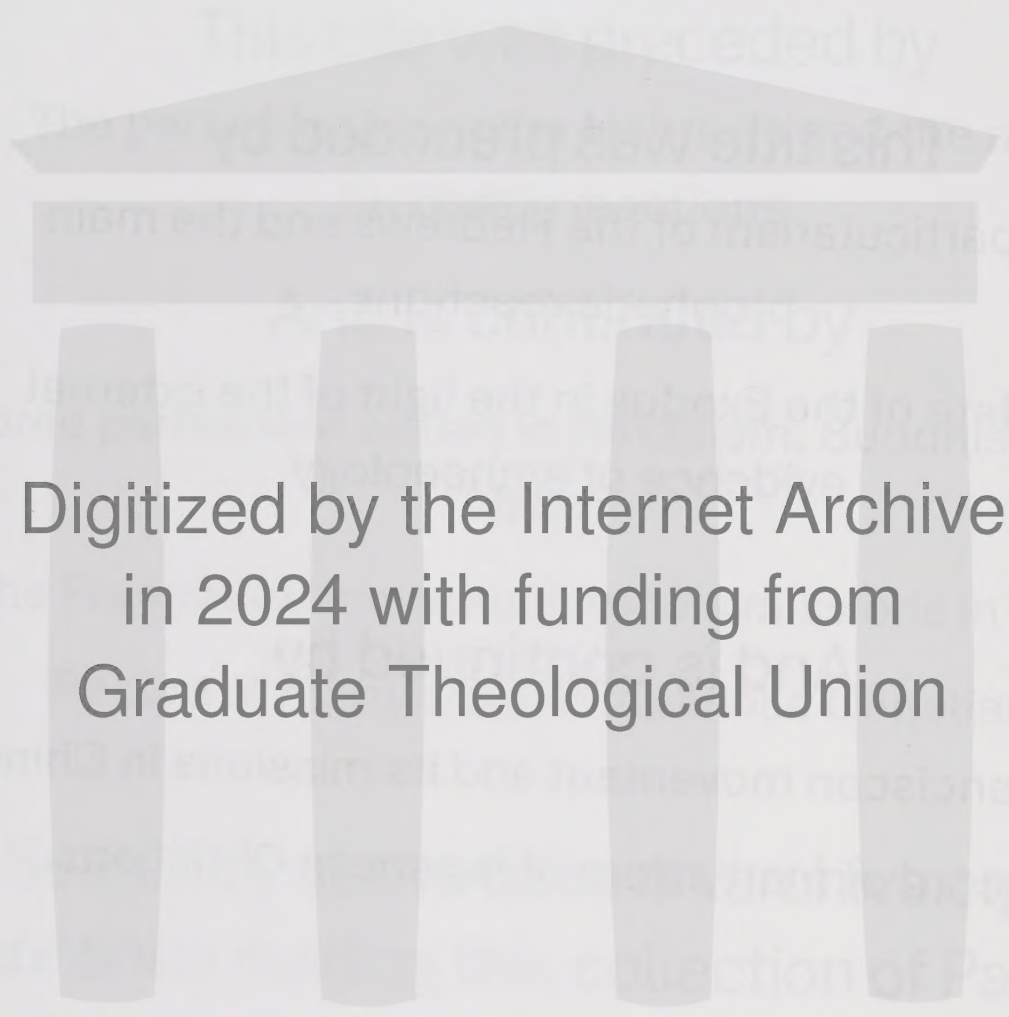
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III.

SOME PERMANENT VALUES IN
HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, AND ISLAM

Lynda Goodsell Blake

SOME PERMANENT VALUES

IN

HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, AND ISLAM.

By

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PREFACE

"Wisdom" has sometimes been defined as the "knowledge of one's ignorance." If that be any approximation of the truth I should feel myself wise indeed. But I do not. This thesis is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements toward a Master's Degree, but I feel far from master of my subject; rather, I count myself but a mere beginner in the field. Perhaps this is a sane state of mind for one who has yet to engage in service upon the mission field. Despite my ignorance, I have gained a vital interest in the subject which I hope to maintain actively in the future, both by further reading, and by visiting the countries of which I write (I have been only in Turkey), in order that I may see and learn for myself, and talk personally with those who have the issues of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam well within their grasp.

There is an abundance of literature upon my subject, but naturally it is not all of equal value. In the books of many missionaries is reflected the spirit of superiority and arrogance, while in the treatises of some nationals one finds too ardent and unbalanced a defense of their native land and faith. I find myself especially indebted to Dr. K. J. Saunders, both for his

many helpful books upon Buddhism, and above all for the stimulation and assistance which his classes have been to me. To him I owe much of my early interest in the subject of the comparative study of religions, a study both intellectually stimulating, and religiously invaluable to one who contemplates missionary service.

The pamphlets of the Jerusalem Conference bearing upon the Christian message and non-Christian systems have been of great value, especially in determining the present trend in the religions under discussion. Also, a worthy series of booklets is the Christian Voices around the World, prepared especially for the Detroit Student Volunteer Convention of 1927. I must also acknowledge my indebtedness to James B. Pratt's India and Its Faith. I found it very helpful as a book, written by a traveller, a layman whose primary interest in the United States is Philosophy, but who made excellent use of a wealth of sympathy and insight as well as intellectual acumen in the writing of his book.

New books are constantly coming from the press-- E. S. Jones's Christ at the Round Table, O. M. Buck's Our Asiatic Christ, K. J. Saunders's The Gospel for Asia-- and they witness to the awakened interest in religions of other lands, studied from a sympathetic point of view.

(I would criticize Dr. E. S. Jones's book in this point, however. He seems to me to manifest comparatively little sympathetic understanding of Hinduism, though his intellectual knowledge of it may be extensive.)

I may well be criticized for the numerous quotations which I have made. It is due solely to the fact that most of my knowledge is "second hand" and if, by quoting, I may come nearer the truth of the situation, I have done so, rather than merely to repeat the meaning in my own words, thereby encountering the risk of giving a false interpretation.

As I have been studying for and writing this thesis the thought has been constantly in my mind that experience on the field must and will prove the value of my conclusions; hence I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Everett Carll Blake, in view of our mutual aspirations toward service in Turkey.

L. G. B.

Berkeley, California

April, 1928

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SOME PERMANENT VALUES
IN
HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, AND ISLAM

"From the unreal lead me to the Real,
From darkness to Light,
From death to Immortality."

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Among the many questions "of the hour" none is more important to the religious world than that of the future of Christian missions. There are those who feel that the day of missions is drawing to a close, and will be replaced by exchange professorships, international tours, and similar gestures of friendship; while there are others who feel that the day of progressive constructive missions is but dawning. If we believe in world brotherhood, and if we believe that the best of our religion is worthy of sharing or "exporting" to other lands in exchange for values which they may give to us, then we believe in the missionary enterprise.

The importance of the future of Christian missions has been recognized by the missionary leaders of the world as they have planned the program of the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council.

As I write, I wish that some magic carpet might transport me to the midst of that group of missionary statesmen and national leaders from many a "foreign" land, who are meeting from March twenty-fourth to April eighth, 1928, to consider among other topics a question vitally related to all their discussions,

"The Christian Message in Relation to non-Christian Systems." On this occasion it is desired that of the delegates "not less than two-thirds should be nationals of the country from which they come. This fact adds greatly to the significance of the meeting. It records the conclusion at which most students of missionary work have arrived: that it is no longer possible to discuss profitably in an international meeting the building of the Kingdom in India or China or Africa in the almost complete absence of Indians or Chinese or Africans. This meeting will bring together a considerable number of those who, as missionary administrators or missionaries or leaders in the indigenous churches are mainly responsible for the direction of Christian missionary work in all parts of the world."¹

Such an international gathering is a concrete manifestation of the changing emphasis in missions. At the Jerusalem meeting the attempt is to understand the point of view of the national Christian, be he from Japan, Turkey, or Africa. Similarly, for the Detroit Student Volunteer Convention, which met last December, a series of booklets were prepared by the nationals of the various countries on Christianity in their lands. In other words, the missionary enterprise is becoming a cooperative enterprise. Another new note in Christian

missions is sounded especially clearly by Dr. E. S. Jones in such books as The Christ of the Indian Road, and Christ at the Round Table, in which he maintains that not creation, not the prophetic array of the Old Testament, not baptism, but Jesus Christ is the center, the heart, of the missionary's message. Whether all agree with him as to the exact content of our message or not, all will agree that Christianity must be proclaimed, propagated, taught and lived unencumbered by the many impedimenta of Christian "theology" and so-called "Western civilization." We must determine what our message is, then cleave to that above all else of dogma or creed.

But a further step must be taken in missions--and is being attempted by a few. In the pamphlet Christianity and Islam Dr. Gairdner divides his subject matter into "Values in Islam" and "Values in Christianity". He is of those who realize that continued destructive criticism of another's faith is of little avail; rather one must study the other's religious system and build upon its inherent values.

The determination of these "values" has given great impetus to the so-called "Study of Comparative Religions"--a "science" which has grown like a hot house plant--too rapidly and without normal nourishment. "The comparative study of religions may be a singularly fruitless

occupation;" says Dr. Saunders. "To compare two great and complex systems like Hinduism and Christianity is almost certainly to become involved in generalizations and even in the barren and unscientific pursuit of setting a higher phase of religion over against a lower. In practice it often becomes a matter of selecting the best within the higher phase to contrast with the worst within the lower. Generalizations are seldom satisfactory, and when they deal with great and complex systems are always misleading. 'Let us take care,' says Professor de la Valée Poussin, 'it is seldom possible to say anything of Buddhism of which the opposite cannot be affirmed and proved.' Yet this note of warning is seldom heeded. No two Hindu thinkers agree as to what is essential Hinduism, and the world is divided as to what is central in Christianity."¹ To avoid the dangers of a comparative study, Dr. Saunders gives us an analysis and interpretation of the three great literary achievements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity--the Gita, the Lotus, and the Fourth Gospel. From this study he concludes that the Johannine interpretation of God as Eternal Reason and Love manifested in the person of the historic Jesus both fulfills the noblest aspirations of Asia and corrects her inveterate tendency to vagueness and pantheism.

Professor A. G. Widgery in his book The Comparative Study of Religions maintains that religious systems may be approached in three ways, all of which are essential to the complete understanding of the religion in question. First, the approach may be on the basis of "types of life" which the religion has produced, the distinctive imprint of the faith upon character. Secondly, by studying the historical development of the systems, especially in relation to outside formative influences. Thirdly, by the analysis of constituent elements of the practices and beliefs of peoples of the faith. He suggests a topical study for the last method, including such points as the source and nature of the religions in question, Supernatural beings, Soul, Sin, Religious Attitudes and Ideals, etc. I have attempted most assiduously to avoid the pitfalls of glittering generalizations, but I have not attempted the study of some great representative literary achievements because I do not feel myself sufficiently acquainted with the material. I will deal rather with the historical development of the faiths, and the resultant beliefs and practices. I will consider one religion at a time rather than topically, both for the sake of continuity and because I feel it is better suited to my purpose of determining the permanent values in each faith. Dr. Reischauer, in an

article relative to the Jerusalem meeting says that far more important than the early beginnings or historical evolution of a religion is its practical working to-day.¹ From such a statement the length of my "analyses" will seem preposterous. My defense is that before I could determine for myself what I felt to be the permanent values (and may I state that the conclusions are, fortunately or unfortunately, almost entirely my own) I had to know as much or more than I have given of the different faiths.

Any intelligible student begins by first defining his terms, and I must do no less. I have chosen to label as "permanent values" those elements of a faith which are essential to the peoples by whom it is embraced; elements which if destroyed would render the characters of these adherents weaker, and more barren. Regardless of whether I believe Christianity to be superior or not, these "permanent values" are those which the further evolution of the faith will conserve because of their inherent worth. I believe most, if not all, of these values are inherent in Christianity, but undeveloped. Dr. Reischauer in the same article maintains that almost all questions asked and answered in the non-Christian systems are found in Christianity but answered in a more helpful, positive fashion.² With that I agree,

¹ Reischauer, International Review of Missions, Jan., 1920.

² Ibid.

except that occasionally the non-Christian "answers" are nearer approximations to Christ's teachings, and are better suited to the Oriental environment and temperament than our Western interpretations. For instance, the Indian doctrine of ahimsa or harmlessness is closely allied to Jesus' gentleness and opposition to brutal force; but where in Western civilization do we find "gentleness" genuinely sought after and respected? We have much to learn from the East of "harmlessness" to all mankind.

"Values" to-day are on all sides greatly jeopardized. Even as the time has come for an honest appreciation and appraisal of other religions, so Christian values are being assailed as they never were before. To quote from Christ at the Round Table, "To start a spiritual offensive in the heart of the most religious and philosophical race of the world, and that at a time when the weapons of modern criticism and modern knowledge are available for counter attacks is too dangerous for words. Suppose it should be revealed.....that Christianity is only one among many ways, that its claim to finality is untenable, that its sharp alternatives are not valid, that it is only a stage in the evolution of religion and it will be passed by, the final stage being a sifted amalgam from the whole."¹ That is exactly what we

¹

Jones, Christ at the Round Table, p. 13.

must be willing to face, for to just such criticism are we subjecting other religions. But as there are those within Christianity who constantly question its tenets just so "the modern spirit is certainly and relentlessly undermining and disintegrating the assumptions and institutions of Hinduism by requiring every tradition, every custom, every doctrine to approve itself as rational and useful."¹ India has her critics from within as well as from without. There is indeed a danger in the present struggle to establish a sound rational nationalism, especially in India and Turkey, that the critics of religion will be so ruthless and short-sighted as to destroy the good along with the bad, not having perspective nor judgment, but being imbued only with the vision of an economically independent nation claiming world-wide respect.

Hence these "permanent values" are those which are essential to the devotees of the faith in the process and progress of their national awakening. But we cannot stop with insular religion. The East and West are meeting to-day as they have met oft before, but now the meshes of commerce, economics, science, education, philosophy, and religion are so entangling that the outcome must be not a "draw" but a decisive victory.

1

Hume, Interpretation of India's Religious History, p. 176.

The conflict must needs be long, and both East and West must go the way of the cross in sacrifice; yet is it too impossible to hope that from the battlefield of civilizations there will be lifted a triumphant song of praise to a God of love who unites all contestants in a cooperative world brotherhood?

Chapter II

ANALYSES

Section 1. RELIGION IN INDIA.

"Religion in India is not a garment worn at certain times or by certain people. It is the framework and the warp of Indian life. A religious ceremony accompanies a man's conception, two more precede his birth, and so down all the way of life and yearly for three generations after death. Piety has transformed into a religious ordinance, loaded with lavishness of rite and ceremony, every act of daily life and every family event. A Hindu's morning ablutions, even the brushing of his teeth, are defined by religious rule and accompanied by a sacred versicle. Each meal begins with an oblation to the gods, a kind of grace. Every Indian home has its oratory, or at least its idol shelf, where is kept a row of images or sacred stones that do duty for divinity. Every day the Brahman must recite a sacred verse, called the Gayatri:

'Let us meditate on the excellent

Glory of the divine Vivifier;

May he illumine our understanding.'

"Religion, again, fixes his profession, or curtails its choice within very narrow limits. Religion rigidly prescribes those who may eat with him; and no woman,

not even his own wife, nor any member of any other caste may enter that charmed circle. The items of diet, the fabric of his utensils, the choice of servants are all religiously determined.

"So with the rest of life. The aspect of the Brahman's house, its furniture and the disposition of its rooms are similarly defined. So is the selection of his wife and his relations with her. Only on certain days may he travel; he may not cross the ocean; and each new undertaking must have religious sanction.

"But this iron yoke is not an irksome bondage, arbitrarily imposed, something irrational and out of gear with the rest of things. It is the natural expression of the Hindu view of life. For all life, and everything that is, each stick and stone, is of one piece with God's life and his own."¹

Such a description of Hindu India, though possibly exaggerated at some points, makes us realize that we are venturing into an entirely new atmosphere, one quite foreign to our pigeon-holed religion of the West, an atmosphere where the natural and the supernatural, the secular and the religious are all merged into One.

"Some Western observers remark that Indian nationalism is nothing but a religious revival and they are right.

¹

Holland, The Goal of India, pp. 8,9.

The distinction between the secular and the religious does not really exist in India. The practical aspect of the religious is the secular, and the theoretical aspect of the secular is the religious; anything that affects one must needs affect the other."¹ Such an inter-relation between the religious and the secular seems similar to the early Semitic beginnings, when the tribal deity was king of the tribe and all the clan were bound by ties which were religious, though relating to the social aspects of community life.

The Indian conception is more civilized and less anthropomorphic, but they have retained that close allegiance between religion and daily living which the West has failed to grasp. India, then, should be the Mecca of those ministers who give impassioned pleas importuning their pewholders to make religion "a part and parcel of life", not merely a Sunday's obeisance.

In a land where religion is accorded the highest place it is natural that the two ideals of the people should be the priest and the wandering hermit, or Sannyasi. India proudly claims that she is the only land to recognize the true worth of the intellect by according the intellectual and priestly caste, the Brahmins, the highest rank. We of the West alternate

1

Cornelius, Indian Approach to India, p. 27.

between our loyalty to the industrial magnates and war lords. Not so in India, where the fighting class assumes the second place and artisans the third. There is a close affinity between Plato's status of professions in his ideal Republic and the Indian view -- first the philosopher-kings, then the guardians of the state, or soldiers, and finally the working group.

And to her wandering ascetics India accords a unique position. The climax of India's religious ideal has ever been renunciation, though one could hardly call it "sacrifice", for it is wholly selfish. "The great souls of India find the joy of the Lord so intense that they quite forget the needs of their fellows."¹ But these Sannyasis, or sadhus, stand for poverty, other-worldliness, and an unsurpassable amount of austerity and torture, all for the purpose of attaining salvation. The census reveals that there are no less than 5,200,000 of these yellow robed ascetic mendicants in India to-day -- some of them vicious imposters, but many possessed of a "benign serenity that breathes the atmosphere of another world."²

In India one finds a medley of religions, but with Hinduism ever predominant; in fact Hinduism might be termed the mother of all faiths (except Islam) in India.

1

Holland, The Goal of India, pp. 34,35.

2

Ibid.

Buddhism is found in northern India, while Jainism, Sikhism, Parsees, and countless other sects flourish inside the boundaries of India -- with only an occasional conflict with Islam to ruffle the sluggish surface of religion.

Section 2. HINDUISM.

What is Hinduism? Even among Hindus themselves this is a mooted question. "So much stress has been laid in the West on the lower phases of Hinduism" that the impression the West holds is that it made up of caste, idolatry, child widows, etc. The Westerner thinks of religion as centered in the temple. "The fact is that the Hinduism of educated India does not center in the temple but in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. You might wipe out Hinduism centering in the temple, along with caste and corrupt social customs, and this Hinduism centering in the Upanishads would live on -- perhaps with greater power. Moreover it is not educated India alone which holds these views.....they have to a very great extent percolated down into the masses so that the ordinary worshipper who goes to the idol temple goes there with a higher interpretation of life in his mind and he explains his idolatry in the light of the background of the All of the Upanishads.

If Brahma is the All then why should not this idol be worshipped as a portion of him? This philosophic Hinduism is all pervasive and not confined to the educated."¹ Of such is the testimony of Dr. E. Stanley Jones. Let us consider others. "Hinduism itself is less a dogmatic religion than a way of life; hence it is capable of the utmost elasticity of doctrine, though extremely rigid in its customs."² Dr. Cornelius touches upon the crux of the question when he implies that Hinduism does not involve beliefs so much as customs, or dharma. Dharma means more than custom, however; it includes the whole of India's social system of caste with its attendant inhibitions and prohibitions. A few years ago twenty-five recognized Hindu leaders were asked "What is Hinduism?" and only seven could agree upon a very tenuous answer: "It is enough if you are born of Hindu parents, and have not been converted to another faith," and one added, "There are no essentials in Hinduism either of belief or practice."³

Or as another Hindu, Dr. Radhakrishnan, a philosopher of note, puts it, "The Hindu attitude to religion is interesting. While fixed intellectual beliefs

¹

Jones, Christ at the Round Table, pp. 8,9.

²

Cornelius, An Indian Approach to India, p. 27.

³

Holland, Goal of India, pp. 66,67.

mark off one religion from another, Hinduism sets itself no limits. Intellect is subordinated to intuition, dogma to experience, outer expression to inward realization. Religion is not the acceptance of academic abstractions or the celebration of ceremonies, but a kind of life or experience. This experience is not an emotional thrill or a subjective fancy but is the response of the whole personality, the integrated self to the central reality."¹ Such a statement is somewhat vague and unreal, but it serves to illustrate that Hinduism involves no absolute acceptance of any creed, but a manner of life. "The theist and the atheist, the sceptic and the agnostic may all be Hindus if they accept the Hindu system of culture and life. In a very real sense practice precedes theory."²

Who then are Hindus? This same group of leaders referred to above decided that "we must content ourselves with saying that any and every one is a Hindu who does not insist that he is a non-Hindu, and who accepts any of the many beliefs and follows any of the many practices that are everywhere recorded as included in Hinduism. Ultimately it all comes to a name."³ Again I am reminded of early Semitic origins where practice was more

1

Radhakrishnan, Hindu View of Life, p. 15.

2

Ibid., p. 77.

3

Holland, Goal of India, p. 67.

important than theory, and the fulfillment of the required ceremonies made one a worshipper of a certain deity regardless of one's interpretation or theology. Despite the plastic definition as to who are Hindus, Professor W. E. S. Holland feels that there are a few points of faith and practice which may be expected almost universally of all Hindus. These characteristics are: the acceptance of the Vedas, reverence for Brahmins, regard for the cow, observance of caste, and belief in karma and reincarnation. "Hinduism, when alive, is a spirit, an atmosphere, an attitude toward life; and the distinctive qualities of that spirit are indifference to the world and things material, fatalism and gentleness."¹

India claims practically all the Hindus, except those few who have defied custom and traveled to lands afar off. The last census revealed 217,000,000 Hindus now in India, with an increase of about a million each decade by the natural growth of the population. The actual proportion of the Hindu community to the total population is decreasing due to the converts that are being won in increasingly large numbers to Islam and Christianity.²

Historically speaking, "Hinduism is just the

¹ Holland, Goal of India, p. 67

² Hume, The World's Living Religions, p. 18.

marriage of the ancient Brahmanical thought and law with the popular cults,"¹ a union which culminated in about the ninth century B. C. as the attempt was made to carry Brahmanism to the lower classes.² In other words, Hinduism is the result of the contact of the faith of the Aryan invaders from across the Himalayas with the aboriginal inhabitants of the land. Our knowledge of the faith of the Aryans is through a collection of their hymns known as the Vedas, of which the earliest, the Rig Veda, is conjectured as dating back as far as 1500 B. C. These hymns are the paeons of a warlike, nomadic people to their pantheon of nature deities, whom they personified in their worship, without temples or images. Varuna, Agni, Indra, Surya, and many others, represent the Heaven, Fire, Thunder, and Sun respectively, deities worshipped by human and animal sacrifice. In the Rig Vedic collection of hymns we find a few³ meditations or tentative speculations on the beginnings of the world, which foreshadow Upanishadic thought. Of the pantheon of deities one figure stands above all others

¹ Holland, Goal of India, p. 68.

² Schweitzer, Religions of the World. Cf. Saunders, Gospel for Asia, p. 37. He puts it at a much later date, following the deification of Sakyamuni, c.400 B.C.

³ Macdonnell, Hymns from the Rig Veda, p.19, (Bk.x, Hymn 129.)

in righteousness, moral strength and compassion --
 Varuna (the οὐρανός of the Greeks), god of the "upper
 air".

"If we have sinned against the man who
 loves us, have ever wronged a brother,
 friend or comrade,
 The neighbor ever with us, or a stranger,
 O Varuna, remove from us our trespass.
 If we as gamesters cheat at play,
 have cheated, done wrong unwittingly
 or sinned of purpose,
 Cast all these sins away like loosened
 fetters, and Varuna, let us be thine
 own beloved."¹

The Upanishads, which we might term "meditations",
 are the next important achievement in the history of
 Hindu literature. Here we find a deeply mystical and
 speculative temper of thought, quite in contrast to the
 naive realism of the Vedas. "The Upanishads are full
 of genuine philosophical insight.....they are the ulti-
 mate source of nearly all Indian religious philosophy.
 They are not widely read to-day, nor have they been
 for years; and yet their influence is greater than
 that of any other book ever written in India. the

¹

Clayton, Rig Veda, pp. 63,64. (Bk. v, Hymn 85.)

Upanishads are essentially religious rather than systematically philosophical."¹

The central thought of the Upanishads is in direct opposition to the polytheistic Vedas, for Brahman is the Supreme Absolute in the universe, not only as the creator of the world, but as the true inner being or unity of all things. Western philosophy expresses this thought in the system of Absolutism in which all living beings, and all nature are considered as an integral part of the Absolute. This Absolute, both in the Upanishadic thought and in Absolutism, is not a mere collection or sum total of all the universe, but the central unity of which natural phenomena are the manifestation or embodiment.²

"Verily in the beginning this world was
Brahman, One alone.

It knew only itself, "I am Brahman".

Therefore it became the all.

Whoever of the gods awoke to this

He indeed became it.

Lo in the case of seers and men,

Whoever thus knows "I am Brahman"

Becomes this All."³

1

Pratt, India and Its Faiths, pp. 77,78.

2

Cf. Absolutism in Calkins, Persistent Problems in Philosophy.

3

Saunders, Lotuses of the Mahayana, p. 25.
Brihadaranyaka, I,4.

Though such a monism is the central thought of the Upanishads of which there are thirteen principle divisions,¹ many differing strands of thought are woven into one skein of blended poetry and prose.

These Upanishads probably took definite written form around 550 B. C., though our knowledge of the chronology of the component books is limited, and not all parts were written during the same period.

But the Vedantic philosophy was too arid for the heart of the Hindu, and time served to find a tenant for the shrine within every human breast. The gods of the Rig Veda passed into oblivion, with the exception of Siva (Shiva) and Vishnu, who gradually assumed the position of alternative deities in a type of theism or theistic beliefs necessary for the practical devotion of Hindus, but denied by their philosophical background. "It is difficult to determine the process by which the vaguely defined, gracious deity, Vishnu, became the god who incarnates himself on earth for man's redemption, or to trace the history of his association with the epic heroes, Rama and Krishna."² Suffice it to say that about the time of the rise of Buddhism (c.500 B.C.) India's two great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, began to take shape.

¹ Cf. Hume, Thirteen Principle Upanishads.

² Holland, The Goal of India, p. 86 sq.

The Mahabharata was originally a poem of moderate length, but later additions have made it many times its original size. The theme of the epic is the early struggles of the Aryan settlers in the upper regions of the Ganges. One of the chief characters is Krishna, who assumes various roles throughout the composite poem. The jewel of the whole epic is called the Bhagavad Gita, or "The Lord's Song", which was probably finished during the first century A. D., and "it is almost certainly aimed at stemming the progress of popular Mahayana Buddhism in its semi-theistic forms, which began to be serious rivals to popular Hinduism about.....the first century A. D."¹ The Gita is "the loveliest flower in the garden of Sanskrit literature. Its influence upon educated India has been and still is without rival."² In form it is an episode in the Mahabharata in which a philosophical discourse is put into the mouth of Krishna, the charioteer, who later is identified as a divine incarnation of Vishnu. It is important to note that the Gita brings salvation within the reach of women and Sudras, whereas before only the men of the three upper classes were accorded the privileges of emancipation from sin. "The Gita is the cry of the Hindu people for an

¹ Saunders, Gospel for Asia, p. 24.

² Holland, The Goal of India, p. 88.

incarnate Saviour,¹ but Sri Krishna was (unfortunately) not worshipped only as the deity of the Gita, as we shall see later.

The Ramayana resembles the Mahabharata, and was originally a poem by Valmiki (about 500 B. C.), which sang the praises of a human hero, Rama. But in the hands of the sweet singer, Tulsi Das, Rama became another incarnation of Vishnu, and the Ramayana, dating from about the time of Shakespeare, has become the Bible of millions in India. The chief incident is Rama's rescue of his chaste wife, Sita, from her abductor, Ravana of Ceylon. Both Rama and Sita are inspiring characters, largely free from excesses, and Sita has become India's ideal of womanhood.

Mention should also be made of the Law-Book or Code of Manu, which is the most revered among several codes of Hindu law. Father Manu was the Moses of the Hindus, and his inviolable laws impose their religious rule upon every detail of an Indian's life. From him comes the division of life into four ashramas or stages:--the student, the householder, the hermit, and the wandering monk or sannyasi.

There are six principle philosophical systems of Hinduism based especially on the Upanishads, but of

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Holland, The Goal of India, p. 89 sq.

these the dominant trend is the Advaitism, or Monism, of the Vedanta group. Sankaracharya, of about 800 A. D., gave final form to this advaita doctrine which emphasizes the impersonal nature of Brahman, and reality as expressed in consciousness. Despite his monism he and his followers recognized personal manifestations such as Siva, Vishnu, Rama, and others as partial expressions of the divine, hence giving room for prayer and worship.

Mankind does not worship philosophy, yet the soul of mankind longs to worship. Thus it was that theistic tendencies developed, especially following the writing of the Gita. Such developments led to the growth of the Bhakti or Devotion Movement, which was an effort to attain salvation through devotion to one's chosen deity. The twin sects of Siva and Vishnu developed apace and the god of each sect was identified with the Infinite Brahman, so that nominal monism was retained. The leader of the Vaishnavite sect was Ramanuja of the twelfth century, whose system still dominates southern India. The Vaishnavite cult of Rama was first spread in northern India by Ramananda during the fifteenth century. Of Tulsi Das the sweet singer we have already spoken. Kabir, one of Ramananda's apostles, was a Moslem convert, but his persistent efforts to combine the two religions met with small success. Nanak, his pupil, was the

founder of the Sikh sect of martial fame. These theistic leaders "believed in one personal god who is full of love and pity for those who worship him, yet all except the followers of Kabir recognized other gods and worshipped idols; they offered salvation to men of all castes demanding faith and devotion (bhakti) toward the Lord."¹

In modern Hinduism we have numerous reform movements, chief of which are the Bramo and Arya Samajs, which focus their attacks upon superstition, idolatry, sacrifice, and moral degeneration, through the channels of revitalized Hinduism. The Renaissance first crystallized in 1834 when English education was introduced into India on a large scale. The forerunner of the reform movement was Ram Mohun Roy, a Hindu with a Moslem education, brought under the influence of William Carey! In 1828 he founded the Brahmo Samaj or "Divine Society" which soon became the center for progressive spirits in Calcutta. His successor, Keshab Chundar Sen, was influenced by Christianity and was opposed to caste, but his varied positions led to dissension in the ranks and three separate branches of the Brahmo Samaj were formed -- the Adi-Brahmo Samaj, the Sadharan Samaj, and the church of the New Dispensation Samaj.

¹ Holland, The Goal of India, p. 93.

The Arya Samaj, with the cry "back to the Vedas", has been characterized by Dr. J. J. Cornelius as the Hindu Protestant Movement. It is opposed to polytheism, idolatry, animal sacrifice, and caste, but retains the doctrines of karma and transmigration. It was founded in 1875 by Dayananda Saraswati, a man of fiery vigor and fervor. The Arya movement is of "sterner stuff" than the Brahmo Samaj and is gaining converts rapidly, especially from Moslems and educated and orthodox Hindus. It is most vociferous in its opposition to Christianity, though many of its social reforms are of a Christian nature.

The Ramkrishna Paramhansa Mission is named after the sainted teacher, Swami Vivekananda, a brilliant Hindu who revived India's self-respect in her own faith by emphasizing the values rather than the defects of Hinduism which had been brought to light by contacts with the West. This glorified Hinduism was wedded to an ardent social program -- and we have a strange paradox. Swami Vivekananda was most helpful in reviving a discouraged India, but he prepared the ground too well for the stultifying theosophy of Mrs. Besant.

Whereas the period of the reform movements reflected a wholesome spirit of moral vigor, the present situation is not so promising. "Hinduism to-day is

defended not because it is true, but because it is Indian."¹ In attempting to evaluate present Hinduism Dr. Macnicol says "this is particularly difficult at the present time because Hinduism appears, more than at any other time in its long history, to be undergoing a process of change and reconstruction which renders the whole religious system and organization more ambiguous than ever in its central principles and more uncertain than ever in its boundaries. The Reform Movements within Hinduism have not ceased to exist but they and the whole of the religion that includes them within itself have suffered a change which is unmistakable and significant..... The effect is a profound alteration in the whole spirit of articulate and active Hinduism. Its first concern is no longer now to mend its ways but to assert its claims. The aim of its organization is to encourage physical rather than moral strength. The power of Hinduism, its numbers, its prestige, its solidarity, -- these are the chief concerns.....at the present time of Hinduism and of Hindus."² In addition to the interest in theosophy a new movement has developed, led by Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya, which aims "not at purging Hinduism of its grossness but at reinforcing its waning energies and equipping it to resist

¹ Holland, The Goal of India, p. 204.

² Macnicol, Christianity and Hinduism, p. C,7.

its rivals and establish its unquestioned supremacy in the land. The Maha Sabha and its president pass resolutions removing the ban of untouchability from the outcastes and opening the temple door to them. But the motive behind this generosity is.....less a sense of brotherhood than a fear lest otherwise many more of these outcastes will, as they have done in the past, abandon Hinduism for a religion which at least will not treat them with contempt."¹

But what of Mahatma Gandhi? How can we label him and pigeon-hole him in this analytical process? Like all great men he defies analysis. He believes in the principles of Jesus Christ, yet finds his chief literary inspiration in the Gita; he is an ardent exponent of the doctrine of ahimsa, and is constructively opposed to caste; above all he believes in India and is her greatest spiritual leader in the travail of her national awakening.

A brief glance at the gods of Hinduism may be both instructive and illuminating. India has her Trinity, or "Trimurti" in Brahmā, Siva, and Vishnu, -- Creator, Destroyer, and Preserver. Brahmā is an antiquated deity who really went out of business long ago, and has been retired on a pension of purely verbal honor these many centuries. He has no cult of his own (except two temples in Rajputana)."² But Siva (Shiva or Mahadev)

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Macnicol, Christianity and Hinduism, pp. 6,7.

2

Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 67.

is the most popular god in India. His popularity is due to the very complexity of his nature. In Rig Vedic times he was Rudra, the destroyer; but modern times have softened it to the Regenerator--he who destroys but to rebuild. In this aspect he is the Reproductive Power of Nature, the Eternally Blessed One to whom many a tender lyric is raised. In a third aspect he is the Great Ascetic dwelling alone among the mountains in meditation. In this aspect he is the god of the ascetic groups. "Siva is made all things to all men that by all means he may please some."¹ There is much however in the cult of Siva that is frightful and terrible, especially in the worship of Kali, his militant wife. She has taken over the "nature" aspect of her husband. He is the Eternal Spirit while she is the Force behind the Universe, especially in the realm of reproduction and death. "The commonest picture of Kali represents her in a riot of blood and carnage. Skulls and severed heads hang from her neck, her tongue, thirsting for blood, protrudes from her mouth, and she stands with one foot on the prostrate body of her husband."² Verily people enshrine as a deity those who are possessed of powers most foreign to the worshippers' nature! Yet Kali has her most tender aspect and she is worshipped

¹ Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 48.

² Ibid., p. 63.

throughout Bengal as "The Mother"; and as such she is loved by millions.

Siva is the most popular god in India but Vishnu has the largest number of exclusive worshippers, and the Vaishnavite sects are the more numerous of the two.

If Brahman̄ is the Creator, and Siva the Destroyer, then verily Vishnu is the Preserver, and is India's "God of Love" -- with all its implications of good and evil. The Vedic Vishnu was a sun god, and no one knows exactly the process of development which made of him a lofty deity worshipped largely through his many avatars or incarnations, of which Rama and Krishna are the most important.

"Of these two incarnations Ram (or Rama) is the older and (according to Western notions) the more admirable; he is also the less popular."¹ (Cf. Ramayana.) Krishna appeals more possibly through the very variety of his character. All Hindus, and most westerners, believe that Krishna was a historical figure, and there is some evidence that points to him as the son of Vasudeva, who lived some two hundred years before, and was the founder of a monotheistic and ethical religion which later developed into a popular movement within Brahmanism; i.e., Hinduism.² In the early Mahabharata stories Krishna

¹ Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 51.

² Saunders, Gospel for Asia, p. 37.

is a cowherd who played the flute and danced with the "gopis" or milkmaids in rather an unseemly fashion. He is the charioteer of the Gita, and rises to divine heights when he is identified as an incarnation of Vishnu in the tenth book of the "Lord's Song". But in the Puranas Krishna makes no attempt to be chaste or pure, but is an amorous daredevil of a questionable sort. But "by his many attributes he is able to appeal to the high and to the low, to the philosophical and the ignorant, to the lofty and the immoral."¹ But to-day, though the Gita is revered for its beauty of expression and the high level of its thought, Krishna is fast being supplanted by Buddha as the moral leader in the minds of even Hindus. The question is not "Krishna or Christ", but "Buddha or Christ."²

The lesser deities of Hinduism include, among others, Ganesh, the Elephant god of Luck; Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu, and the goddess of wealth; Saraswati, the goddess of Learning and the wife of Brahmā; and Hanuman, the beloved Monkey god who symbolizes loyalty in the tales of the Ramayana.

It is hoped that we should know better than to suppose that by considering the Literature, Philosophy, and Gods of the Hindu people we had learned the whole of "the Hindu religion". To most Christians it has

¹ Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 56.

² Cf. Saunders, Gospel for Asia, p. xii, Preface.

become axiomatic to identify religion and creedal worship, but Hinduism puts far more stress upon the practice of ritual than the beliefs of the individual. As we have indicated before, "it is inappropriate to speak of Hinduism as a faith; it means rather the accepted manner of life of those born within certain castes and families in India. When Hindus themselves refer to Hinduism they do not speak of it as a religion; they use the word Dharma "¹ -- a good translation for which is Law.

The chief factor in Dharma is Caste, and of this we must speak without preconceived Western prejudice. Caste is the one supreme authority in India, dividing the country into 2,378 compartments, with four main horizontal divisions. Historically speaking, "the ancestor worship and the patriarchal family date from the days when the Aryan people were still undivided; and while caste is a more recent growth, the spirit and principles of caste lie at the basis of early society."² To the Hindu the bonds of caste have a religious sanction due to their sacred origin in the Rig Veda.

"When they divided Parusa how many portions
did they make?

What do they call his mouth, his arms?

¹ Pratt, India and Its Faith, p. 117.

² Farquhar, The Crown of Hinduism, p. 191.

What do they call his thighs and feet?

The Brahman was his mouth, of both arms
was the Rajanya made.

His thighs became the Vaisya, from
his feet the Sudra was produced."¹

But it is more than probable that this "sanction" was projected back from existing customs. The Hindu word for caste is "Varna" which means color; this then points to the conclusion that the fair-skinned Aryans, upon coming into India, desired to protect their racial strain from the dark taint of the original aborigines of the land. Hence these demarcations were an economic and racial necessity: the Brahmans performed the priestly function; the Kshatriyas were the warrior class; the Vaisyas were the merchants and artisans; the Sudras the laboring class, or slaves. We have class divisions in the West, but on the whole, the boundaries are flexible, and have no religious sanctions.

"In India the race has been preserved amid the countless military and political changes of India by its faithful adherence to the traditional family and caste life. Thus the old attitude is very largely justifiable but the changed circumstances of India render a new attitude most necessary to-day."² Says Dr. Radhakrishnan: "Paradoxical as it may seem, the system of caste is the

¹ Rig Veda, Ek. x, Hymn 90, vs. 11,12.

² Farquhar, The Crown of Hinduism, p. 192.

outcome of tolerance and trust. Though it has now degenerated into an instrument of oppression and intolerance, though it tends to perpetuate inequality and develop the spirit of exclusiveness, these unfortunate effects are not the central motives of the system. If the progressive thinkers of India had the power, as they have the authority, they would transform the institution out of recognition."¹ He continues, giving us an able defense of caste from the historical point of view, the truth of which most Western scholars admit. But that caste must go if India is to progress no real leaders doubt. Dr. E. S. Jones gives the following account of his visit to Gandhi's "Ashram": ".....here was simplicity yoked to national service and to the service of the poor; here was deep voluntary sharing with the unprivileged; for cultured men wearing only a loin cloth dug in the fields, turned the "charkha" (spinning wheel) and did scavenger's work -- Brahmans among them. Here was a national struggle going on.....a struggle for inward and outward freedom, but there was no hate and no bitterness; a quiet friendliness pervaded all. The soul of it was Gandhi."² Would that India might produce more Gandhis! If India is going to attempt to mix Western industrialism and mechanicalism with the

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Radhakrishnan, Hindu View of Life, p. 93.

2

Jones, Christ at the Round Table, p. 67.

Oriental social system some readjustment must be brought about.

But we cannot fully understand caste without a knowledge of the doctrines of Karma and transmigration. We of the West ordinarily dismiss the doctrines from our minds as thoroughly ridiculous and untenable. But L. Adams Beck¹ maintains that the conception is not so unscientific as is imagined. Law is regarded as ruling the universe, rather than a placative, whimsical deity such as he thinks the Christians worship.

"The Lord let the house of a beast to the
soul of a man

And the man said: 'Am I your debtor?'

And the Lord: 'Not yet; but make it as
clean as you can

And then I will give you a better'."2

This verse illustrates the conception of transmigration as a well-nigh endless process of rebirths whereby man is accorded the merits or demerits of his previous existence. This transmigration is not necessarily progressively good -- in fact orthodox Hindus believe that the world is constantly deteriorating, that the Golden Age is in the past.³ In like manner caste was supposed

1

Atlantic Monthly, May, 1926, The Challenge, p. 586 sq.

2

Ibid.

3

Holland, Goal of India, p.76..

to reflect the exact reward of each man's achievement but "thinking Hindus no longer hold.....the doctrine that each man's caste is an infallible index of the progress his soul has reached in its.....journey. The Depressed Classes Mission is clear proof that Hindus no longer believe that the Outcaste is a soul whose past record is so foul that physical contact with him is spiritually dangerous to the caste Hindu.....yet if these things are incredible, caste has no religious basis left."¹ In our enlightened West not long ago even preachers of the gospel arose to a noble defense of slavery; and any study of Semitic origins will show that religion was originally for the fortunate, not for the "unfortunates" (mourners, diseased, poor, etc.), for their status was a result of Divine ill will.

Karma then is the Hindu explanation of the problem of evil in terms of mathematical exactness. And while the dreamer wishes to see his ideals realized immediately and entirely, the Hindu code of transmigration insists on gradual transformation. It takes note of the laws and conditions of reality -- a reality where progress is slow and conditioned. Not only is Karma an answer to the problem of evil but it recognizes the rigor of the law of cause and effect. This tends to an acceptance

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Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements, p. 432.

of the "status quo" not so much as the "will of God" but the "deserts of man".

Given this attitude, miracles are as impossible to the Oriental as they are to the rigidly scientific Occidental. Dr. E. S. Jones quotes Gandhi as saying, in regard to the progress of Indian salvation, "No miracles are to be expected, and it may take ages."¹ In view of such logic, infinite patience and perspective, what must Hindus think of miracles, conversion, and deathbed salvation?

But is there no escape from one's Karma? Logically, I do not see that there can be a real escape from Karma, but through various avenues the number of rebirths may be shortened and salvation may be attained, though still in strict accordance with cause and effect. In the first place the world is regarded as an "illusion" (maya); i. e., materiality is non-real, the real is spiritual, hence the less one has to do with the ways of the world, the better. The ways, or avenues, of attaining liberation are varied. For the Vedantist who is essentially a philosopher there is jnana marga or intuitive knowledge, such as is revealed in the Upanishads. This way of salvation is admittedly the hardest, and few are capable of complete realization through such mystical communion. For the Bhaktas, there

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Jones, Christ at the Round Table, p. 69.

is Bhakti Marga, or the way of "devotion" or worship and faith. This is the most common path, and is that pursued by the Sannyasis and such wandering ascetics. It is more social than jnana marga, which is essentially individualistic. To be sure all salvation is for the individual alone, but the methods of attainment may be more or less social in their process. The Gita is the chief exponent of this type of salvation, where theism first had its birth. Devotion and faith were of necessity to something, hence the importance of the various gods grew as the Bhakta movement developed in fervor and outreach. Previous to the Gita salvation was attained through non-action, for action was concerned usually with the material world, and hence jeopardized one's Karma. But in the Gita Krishna admonishes Arjuna to do his duty as a warrior, but let his actions be disinterested, with no desire for reward, and in that way the actions, whether good or bad, would not affect his Karma. Hence we have the possibility of salvation by works, or Karma Marga.¹

The goal toward which these various paths lead is ultimately the same, though the two schools, Vedantist and Bhakta, describe it in slightly different terms. To the Vedantist the goal might be termed "realization"; "moksha" is identity of the Atman with Brahman, as a drop

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Cf. Saunders, Gospel for Asia, p. 109, sq.

of water becomes one with the ocean, and so profound is the union that mankind can define it only in terms of what it is not -- "neti, neti" -- not that, not that, -- but what? Only he who has attained can tell, and such an one cannot speak in intelligible terms, for union with the Infinite is beyond human expression. For the Bhakta group the goal is rather "attainment" (cf. moksha) -- a blissful state wherein the soul holds communion with its personal God, and a state open to even Sudras and women.

Those who attain or realize salvation are called "jiwan muktis" ("mukti" is another word for salvation, similar to "moksha".) Dr. E. S. Jones reports that from his conversations with hundreds of Hindus he has heard of only three admittedly historical figures who have attained such salvation. "The idea of immediately finding God does not seem to be practicable. It does not seem to be in the realm of the immediately realizable."¹ Those whom India recognizes as having attained are Chaitanaya, who was worshipped with passionate devotion by another "jiwan mukti", Ramkrishna Paramhansa, both of whom are fast becoming deified, especially in Bengal;² and Rama Tiratha.³ Such a group may seem meager and

¹ Jones, Christ at the Round Table, p. 67.

² Holland, Goal of India, pp. 92, 190.

³ Jones, op. cit., p. 63

yet I cannot but feel that the Hindu conception of one who has attained is far loftier than our ideal of a "saved" individual. Those three, whether morally, spiritually, or intellectually equivalent to St. Paul, St. Francis, and Luther, probably occupy the same relative positions as to the profundity and distinctive nature of their religious experience. Christianity has produced but one genuine Francis of Assisi -- why expect India to produce more? And just because of the very loftiness of their ideal of "jivan muktis" "one is amazed at the persistence of the human heart as it knocks at the gate of Heaven and receives so little response. But one is reverent too in the face of such Vast Persistence."¹ Union with God is the desire of every sincere Indian heart. And this union is one of joy and bliss -- or "ananda". "Only a message of joy can capture the heart of India, the joy of knowledge (Vedanta) or the joy of worship (Bhagavatism)."²

A further word concerning "ahimsa" is essential to understanding the "Hindu view of life". A negative definition of the word would be "non-injury" -- not taking life, be it human, animal, bird, or insect. This Mahatma Gandhi has incorporated into his doctrine of "non-violence". But he goes further. Positively

¹ Jones, op. cit. p. 56.

² Buck, Our Asiatic Christ, p. 156.

the "ahimsa" involves gentleness and kindness, as we reverence in St. Francis of Assisi. This doctrine is carried to an extreme by Jainists, whose founder (about the time of Buddha) wore a mask over his mouth lest his breath harm insects, and whose followers condemn Mahatma Gandhi for attempting to rid India of her pestilential stray dogs. Paradoxically many great names are associated with the doctrine of "ahimsa" though to Western minds the individuals or deities seem most belligerent -- Rama, the gentle hero of the Ramayana; Krishna, who urges Arjuna to fight only because it his duty; and Siva, who, though he is called the Destroyer, is worshipped largely by bloodless sacrifices. The soul of India is gentleness -- and "ahimsa" is its expression; as India's soul has not attained peace, and hence is wracked with discord, so the manifestation of "ahimsa" is often distorted and inconsistent.

In concluding this section I shall quote from Dr. Radhakrishnan once again. "That the Hindu solution of the problem of the conflict of religions, which seeks unity not in a common creed but in a common quest, is likely to be accepted in the future seems to me fairly certain. The spirit of democracy with its immense faith in the freedom to choose one's ends and direct one's course in the effort to realize them makes for it. It is impressing on us the fundamental unity of all

religions by pointing out that the genius of the people, the spirit of the age and the need of the hour determine the emphasis in each religion."¹ Of such is the dictum of a Hindu, and as such we must respect him and his faith, though we cannot entirely agree.

Section 3. BUDDHISM.

"Buddhism is a stream that has its source in the complex and elusive system of Brahmanism known to-day as Hinduism"² much as Christianity has its roots deep in the fertile soil of Judaism. Neither Gautama Buddha nor Jesus Christ purposed, probably, to establish new religions, yet the religions of both have become well-nigh international. "Buddhism, at least in its earliest and truest form, is no religion at all but a mere system of morality and philosophy founded on a pessimistic theory of life."³ But whether originally Buddhism was more than an ethical sect within Hinduism or not it certainly is to-day more than a highly ethical philosophical system, but must be reckoned among the world's living religions, for it involves the worship of a deity who is "real" no less than the Hindu Brahman or the Christian God. "Those scholars who say that original Buddhism was virtually atheistic are right,

¹ Radhakrishnan, Hindu View of Life, p. 60.

² Saunders, Epochs in Buddhist History, p. vii.

³ Hume, The World's Living Religions, p. 59, quoting Monier Williams, Buddhism, p. 537.

but to say that Buddhism down through the centuries has been atheistic is as far from the truth as it could be."¹

To facilitate the understanding of Buddhism it may be well to recognize three separate currents of thought in the teachings of Buddha. We have already noted the Brahmanical tendencies, and while Sakyamuni revolted against much of their doctrines, still Brahmanical thought formed the background of his life, just as Jesus broke with the customs of the Jews but was often held in the grip of their thought patterns. A second current is the philosophy underlying Buddha's Four Noble Truths, which, as we shall see later, is in opposition to the compassionate Spirit of the Great Teacher. The latter makes the third current in Buddhist thought an element of supreme value. Buddhism as a religion we may understand as being composed of Buddha's teachings born out of Hinduism, and the subsequent worship accorded to the deified Buddha, which he, during his life, never permitted.

Buddhism involves far less in the way of ritual and social observances than Hinduism for Buddha was opposed both to ceremonialism and caste. On the other hand, while the beliefs of Buddhism are varied, it involves more in

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Reischauer, Christianity and Northern Buddhism, p. 21.

the way of positive convictions than Hinduism, such as speculations concerning the nature of the self; the reason for suffering and escape from its pangs; the nature and attainment of Nirvana, etc.; as well as belief in and practice of higher ethical standards than those of Hinduism.

Strangely enough Buddhism was strangled out of the land of its birth. For in British India to-day the only survivors of purely Indian Buddhism are a small community of 2,000.¹ But now it is fifth among the greatest religions from the standpoint of the numbers of followers, claiming some 137,000,000 as compared with Hinduism which ranks as fourth. But the influence of Buddhism is far broader than that of Hinduism, for its devotees are found in almost every land of the Far East, especially in Tibet, Ceylon, Burma, Siam, China, Korea, and Japan. Buddhism is now professed by no very large group of Aryans or Semites but by Mongolians.

Buddhism belongs to those religions which are classed as positive, or founded, along with Islam and Christianity, which owe their origin to an individual and his teachings. In 1896 a tablet was discovered on the borders of Nepal in the country of the Gurkhas, which is supposed to mark the birthplace of Gautama

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Hume, World's Living Religions, p. 60.

Buddha. This Prince Siddhartha, the son of a small chieftain of the Sakya clan, of the house of the Gotamids, was a contemporary of Aeschylus and Pythagoras in Greece, Jeremiah and Ezekiel in Israel, Zoroaster in Persia, Lao-tze and Confucius in China. 'Twas indeed a Golden Age! Though miraculous tales are associated with the Prince's birth, his mother died soon after he was born, and his upbringing was relegated to his aunt. His father coveted the career of a warrior prince for his young son, and accordingly prescribed for him a life of princely activity, free from reflection or sorrow. Legends have idealized Gautama's intellectual skill and prowess, and his compassion. Delightful tales, called the Jatakas, picture him in his previous births as a hero of great compassion, gentleness, and love, whether in animal or human form.

Tradition says that the veil was drawn from Buddha's eyes when, one day while he was riding, visions of a leper, a very old man, and a corpse brought to him a consciousness of disease, old age, and death; and no longer could he be satisfied with riches, leisure, sports, or even his lovely wife, Yasodhara, and their young child. He renounced everything and donned the yellow robe to become a sannyasi, seeking to save his soul.

He lived as an ascetic for six years practicing the severest of austerities, yet he found no "reality". He had gathered a group of five disciples about him, but when he renounced asceticism, too, as wanting, they deserted him. Alone and baffled, Mara the Tempter is said to have come to him in his hour of trial, whispering in his ear of the loveliness of long-neglected joys and the charms of princely life. But the religious instinct was strong within him, and "faint, yet pursuing" he turned toward Budh Gaya, near Benares. His meditations of the past years proved not to be in vain, but they needed to be allied with a positive purpose. As he sat at midday or eventide beneath a peepul-tree, there came to him the supreme vision for which he searched so long. The tree, now known as the Bo- or Bodhi-tree, the tree of Knowledge or great Enlightenment, Fa Hsian, a Chinese pilgrim saw some thousand years later; and even now there is a tree in Ceylon which is said to have been a scion from the original planted by Sanghamitta, daughter of King Asoka, about 240 B. C.

"Sitting under the Bo-tree.....he went through successively purer and purer stages of abstraction of consciousness until the sense of omniscient illumination came over him; in all piercing intuition he pressed on to apprehend the wanderings of spirits in the mazes of

transmigration and to attain the knowledge of the sources whence flow the sufferings of the world, and of the path which leads to the extinction of this suffering. 'When I apprehended this (he is reported to have said) my soul was released from the evil of desire, released from the evil of earthly existence, released from the evil of ignorance. To the released awoke the knowledge of release; extinct is rebirth, finished the sacred course, duty done; no more shall I return to the world; this I know'. Henceforth the Gautama Siddhartha was the Buddha, the "Enlightened."¹ After his "revelation" Buddha was again approached by Mara the Tempter who reminded him that the multitude are slow to understand, that to keep his knowledge a secret would be far easier, but Buddha's natural love for humanity rescued him as his religious nature has before, and his message was saved for mankind.

The first sermon we have recorded is the one he preached to the five ascetics who had scorned him as an apostate, but soon became his devoted followers. "Straightway he went forth throughout his native country of Magadha, in north India, and preached his new-found gospel of salvation.....saying that an earnest person needs only to exercise a wise manipulation of his own

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Saunders, Story of Buddhism, pp. 22-23.

states of consciousness without any of the conventional appliances of religion such as duty, worship, ceremony, dogma, priesthood or supernatural connections. Buddha inveighed especially against the current Hindu conception of an alleged metaphysical supreme being and the value of prayer and the sacredness of the Vedic scriptures."¹

The disciples that he gained Buddha sent forth to preach the message of salvation.

"Go ye now out of compassion for the world, for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach the doctrine which is glorious. Proclaim a consummate, perfect and pure life of holiness."²

The "Enlightened One" was a greatly revered friend of both rich and poor, and among them he wrought many conversions. Buddha died at the age of eighty, in 480 B. C., happy in the knowledge of his large group of disciples and friends. His forty years of service after his Enlightenment bespeak in eloquent terms the character of the man.

The history of Buddhism³ in India is one of high mountain peaks and low valleys. Soon after the death of Buddha came the conquest of India by Alexander the

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Hume, The World's Living Religions, p. 63.

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Sacred Books of the East, xiii, pp. 112-113.

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Vide Saunders, Story of Buddhism, Epochs in Buddhist History.

Great (before 323 B. C.). It served to unite the many provinces of India, though the process was not rapid. The first Emperor of the united empire was Chandragupta I, who came to his throne after the iron grip of Alexander was released and the provinces began to feel their individual need of protection. India learned much from the Greeks during this period, especially the art of building in stone. The grandson of Chandragupta was Asoka the Great, who came to the throne in 273 B. C. and is called the Constantine of Buddhism, as well as its Saint Paul, for he was converted to Buddhism in 259 B. C. and from thence forth extended the religion even beyond the length and breadth of his own land. This conversion begins the Golden Age of Buddhism, and we have records of it from the rock-hewn and pillar "Edicts of Asoka." His reforms began within his own court and missions were sent to Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, distant parts of India, and Ceylon. Those in the Near East failed, but those in the Far East found fertile soil. The Buddhism of King Asoka was largely stripped of philosophy but it centered in moral precepts and good works. Asoka himself was an anomaly, for, strictly speaking, he should have given up his kingly career, but his love for his land (or his love of power) led him to respect the Sangha movement and bestow upon it much royal favor, though he did not take to the yellow

robe himself, except nominally. He spent much of his career building roads, improving irrigation and forestry, in organizing charity, in short, in doing all within his power to make the world a better place to live in, though supposedly the purpose of Buddhism was to escape from the world of sin and woe. Perhaps the most far-reaching of Asoka's acts was the calling of a council in 239 B. C. for the purpose of enumerating and arranging in a systematic manner the sacred literature of Buddhism into what was later called the "Tripitaka". Asoka died in 232 B. C. and his empire soon split up into petty states, but the mighty force of his religious leadership was of lasting value.

With the death of Asoka and the return of the petty states, India as a whole became a prey to renewed Greek invasions from the northwest. And from the far north came the Mongolians, pouring over the Himalayas into India's distraught land. The effect of these invasions upon the nature of Buddhism was marked. During the time of Asoka "dagobas" and "stupas" began to be erected over sacred spots, and a figure representing a former mythical Buddha was enlarged by Asoka himself, but statues of Buddha did not begin to appear until 100 A. D., when they reflected Greek influence in their design. Polytheism began to creep in through the worship of Bodhisattvas (Buddhas in their heavenly births, before they have

attained Buddhahood). Due to Mongolian influence the conception of Nirvana as actionless was replaced by a joyous Paradise, and such it has continued to be for many Buddhists. And, most important of all, by 100 A. D., Buddha came to be worshipped as a Saviour who was the manifestation of an Eternal One and one through whom man might direct his prayers toward this Universal Light. Buddha himself must have turned in his grave at such a travesty upon his teachings! (Cf. later section.)

And as a final blow, Sanskrit was adopted instead of Pali as the sacred language, and Sanskrit is to Pali much as Latin is to Italian.

The man who did for this revised Buddhism what Asoka had done for earlier Buddhism was Kanishka, who probably came to his throne in about 100 A. D. Like Asoka he summoned a Council to determine the nature of this new Buddhism, and by 400 A. D. this "Great Vehicle" or Mahayana Buddhism became the dominant faith of the northern countries, claiming also Tibet, Japan, China, and Korea, while Hinayana, or "Lesser Vehicle" became established in Southern India, Ceylon, Burma, and Siam. From this time on there were two very different schools in Buddhism, somewhat similar to the Vedanta and Phakta groups in Hinduism -- the Hinayana which claimed that the pathway to Nirvana is narrow and but few attain; while the Mahayana claimed a broad road open to many.

Thus Buddhism grew away from the land of its birth. A Chinese pilgrim, Fa Hsian, visiting India about 400 A. D., describes the Buddhism he found in a journal of his travels. His account reveals that whilst Buddhism had grown in power it had lost in purity, and had become an idolatrous polytheism, calling on gods and spirits to help, and setting up numberless shrines. The life of Gautama had moreover become heavily encrusted with miraculous happenings, and the Bhikkus had come to rely more and more upon supernatural powers, which they based upon a totally un-Buddhistic belief that the soul of man is akin to that of God."¹

But even worse perversions of Buddha's message came into being. He had attempted to suppress the emotions, but sexuality began to invade Buddhism full force, and a Tantric cult developed with female Buddhas who were associated with the vilest of rites.

The power of the old Brahminism began to reassert itself, especially under the leadership of Sancharacharya, and coupled later with the penetration of Islam, Buddhism of a very perverted nature was rightfully crushed out of the land of its growth by 800 A. D.

Buddhist literature is not as easily surveyed as the literature of Hinduism because of its complexity and the many sects and sub-sects which have left us

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Saunders, Story of Buddhism, p. 67.

records of their beliefs. The oldest source is doubtless the Pali Canon, or Tripitaka, meaning "Three Baskets." This "Pali Tripitaka may be regarded as not very different from the Magadhi Canon of the third century B. C."¹ Though the Canon was probably fixed during the reign of Asoka, translations into Pali were not made until two or three centuries later. The "Three Baskets" are the Vinaya, concerning the discipline of the Bhikkhus; the Suttas, which contain the discourses of Buddha; and the Abhidhamma, composed of metaphysical speculations. The first translation made was of the Dhammapada (Buddha's Way of Virtue), by Max Müller in 1870, and a complete translation of the canon would probably cover ten thousand pages. The Jataka tales are of interest both because they reflect the ideas of Karma and transmigration and because of the insight they give into the popular conception of Buddha's character.

Sanskrit came to be used as the literary language when the two schools first developed their differences, hence we have a large body of Sanskrit literature which is the records of the multitudinous sects and their attitudes toward Buddha. It is especially interesting to trace their "mythologizing process" by which Buddha is changed from a historic figure to a docetic apparition. But much critical work must be done on these

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Saunders, Epochs in Buddhist History, p. 41

texts before their true value can be appreciated.¹

The jewel of Buddhist literature is the Saddharma Pundarika, or the "Lotus of the True Law". It is dated variously between the second century B. C. and A. D. -- the most probable date is toward the end of the first century A. D. The aim of the book is to relate the historic Sakyamuni to the Eternal Buddha. Sakyamuni is the Father, Supreme Spirit, Creator, and Destroyer, though he is never directly spoken of as God Himself, but the one through whom future Buddhas will attain Buddhahood. However, for all practical purposes Sakyamuni is the "One behind the Many." The purpose in writing the book was to combat the attractiveness of Hinduism as depicted in the Bhagavad Gita. "Here, in the serene light of a heavenly mount (Vulture Peak) a kind of allegory or mystery play, with even less history than the Gita, unfolds itself."²

One of the most interesting books is the Milinda Panha, "which though accepted by the orthodox and written in Pali, contains the germs of two important doctrines, which, as they developed, separated the popular Mahayana from the more austere Hinayana Buddhism. These are the

¹ Saunders, Epochs in Buddhist History, p. 45

² Saunders, Gospel for Asia, p. 117

doctrines of salvation by faith, and of the Bodhisattva, a compassionate being whose ideal is service, and who is less self-centered than the Arhat. It is an apologia in the form of a series of dialogues upon the main teachings of the orthodox, and may well have been compiled to win inquiring minds of the day away from the allurements alike of the new Buddhism and of other popular schools of Hinduism. It is on the whole a work of art, 'the masterpiece of Indian prose', eloquent of the skill and genius of its unknown author. We know that King Milinda, or Menander, was a Graeco-Bactrian ruler of Kābul and Punjab during the second century B. C. and the book must belong within a century of this time, when his memory was still living."¹

Two writers whom we might well mention in this connection are Asvaghosa and Buddhaghosa, who are classed usually as commentators. The former, in about 100 A. D., compiled the Sutralamkara (The Way to Nirvana), "a collection of ninety stories notable for their fine narrative style and for their wide range of interest."² Buddhaghosa, in about 400 A. D., re-edited and annotated the early Pali Canon, and is always referred to as 'the great commentator'."³

¹ Saunders, Epochs of Buddhist History, p. 53

² Ibid, p. 56.

³ Vide Ibid, pp. 6, 36, 41.

This list by no means exhausts the literary achievements of the Buddhists, but it gives an indication of the types of literature, and their complexity, as well as attesting to the need of more critical study by competent scholars on the whole subject.

In this connection it might be interesting to note a few of the symbols of Buddhism, for though Buddha was directly opposed to ceremonialism, much of it has crept in to Buddhist worship. The Lotus most often represents Buddhism, symbolizing the water lily which rises white and unsullied to the sunlight from the muddy depths beneath. "As the Cross is the sign of Christianity and the Crescent of Islam, so Buddhism has for its blazon the spokes and nave of a Wheel.....The simplest and most probable explanation is that it stands for a conqueror's chariot that rolls through the world in triumph; another that it stands for the chariot of the Sun that lightens the universe. In either case the Buddhist Wheel makes an enormous claim."¹ The Bo-tree under which Buddha had his enlightenment is often used as a motif in Buddhist art, as well as Buddha's sacred foot-prints; and elephants are pictured as worshipping before the sacred tree. These, with the dagobas, previously mentioned, did much to popularize and corrupt the original Buddhism.

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Saunders, Story of Buddhism, p. 28.

Let us turn to a study of Buddha's religious experience. "There are those who picture Sakyamuni as the world's greatest rationalist who by a process of keen analysis laid bare before the unbiased mind the ultimate elements of existence, especially the elements that make up our human personality. There are other scholars who say that while Sakyamuni may have been a sort of rationalist, this was but a preliminary step by which to arise above all human thought and that in reality he was the world's first great mystic. If one regards the Buddha's experience at the moment of his enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree as central in his teaching, then one must agree that above all else he was a mystic....(but) after one has called Buddha a mystic one may know certain things about him and his central teachings but not much. There still remain the big problems as to the content of his mystical insight and as to how he related this insight to the experiences of his daily life during his long ministry of fifty years."¹ "At the core, then, of early Buddhism, was the Yogi, Solitary, the Great Seer, the Mystic -- Sakyamuni, surrounded by a small group of others who had caught his spirit and entered into some of these difficult practices. At the circumference were all sorts of lay people, to whom

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Reischauer, Christianity and Northern Buddhism, pp. 78.

he could not communicate even an idea of such things. For them he had a different technique, and to them he offered a different goal."¹ We may then call Sakyamuni a mystic but "we must think of his mysticism as of the impersonal type.....in which ultimate reality is not a void but a fulness and this fulness is a 'Sameness' that lies 'beyond good and evil', yea, 'beyond being and non being'" but which is devoid of the personal aspects of "moral relations and ethical love."²

What then was the solution Buddha had found? He afterwards formulated his finding into his "Four Noble Truths". These truths are fundamental in the philosophy of Buddhism but they are less important in the religion of the people except as their strength flavors all Buddhist thought. The truths are like a doctor's analysis, diagnosis, cure, and prescription offered for the salvation of the world. In brief they are:

1. All is suffering.
2. This suffering springs from desire, egoistic longing for sensual pleasure on earth, or for pleasure in heaven, or for personal annihilation, etc.
3. The cure for this suffering is to be free from desire.

¹ Saunders, Christianity and Buddhism, p. 16

² Reischauer, Christianity and Northern Buddhism, p. 9.

4. The way to be quit of this desire is to follow certain paths of righteousness -- the Eightfold Path.

Given the first assumption, all is suffering, the logic of these truths is irrefutable. We of the west would say that Buddhism is essentially pessimistic, but Buddhists ardently maintain that their religion "differs from other religions in its view of life, not in recognizing the presence of evil but in insisting that all change and impermanence are evil, and that therefore our changing existence is necessarily and thoroughly bad. Not only is sorrow bad in itself but pleasure is not really good even while it lasts because it can not last forever."¹ Be that as it may, one must admit that life is evil, and that salvation consists in release from life if one is to be a good Buddhist.

In the second truth Buddha is essentially scientific, answering the questions of "What are the symptoms of our common disease?" and "What is the cause of these?" by saying, "the cause of suffering is always desire, even the suffering of disease, which may be due to desire in previous existences" (Karma and transmigration.) In the third truth Buddha believes that by overcoming desire we may avoid sorrow, by killing the desire to live we cease continued rebirth, which, Buddha believed,

¹ Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 387.

might be attained in this life. The way or method of extinguishing desire is the Eightfold Path (a middle path between austerity and sensuality) which includes: right belief; right aspiration; right speech; right action (keeping precepts); right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; right contemplation.¹

Perhaps a word concerning the Buddhist attitude toward Karma and transmigration will not be out of place at this point. "The Buddhist doctrine of Karma is essentially the same as the Hindu conception. "Each being has his own action, each is heir to his own action; each is the fruit of his own action's womb; each is kinsman of his own action as overlord and protector. It is their own actions that divide men up, allotting them to high or low estate" (shades of Hindu caste?)--such is the definition of Karma as given in the Buddhist Milinda Panha. The doctrine of transmigration is however a little different due to Buddha's conception of the ego, though it is improbable that many appreciate the difference to-day. Buddha attempted to substitute "for a transmigrating soul, passing, as in the Upanishads, like a caterpillar from leaf to leaf, a stream of energy clothing itself in body after body."² But if the body

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For explanation see Saunders, Story of Buddhism, p. 24.

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Saunders, Heart of Buddhism, p. 15.

dies and the ego disintegrates, being only a collection of qualities, what is there that is subject to Karma to be reborn? It is our will to live and our moral character that are reborn. These form the core of our being, and create for themselves after the disintegration of our present body a new one corresponding exactly to their nature."¹

In truth Buddha's Eightfold Path is an excellent way of salvation, consistent and apparently feasible in time. But it implies a subtle selfishness. Desire is the root of all suffering, but we are to make the saving of our "ego" the sole purpose (i. e. desire) in our lives. Although Buddha wished to rid the world of gross physical selfishness, he championed a far more dangerous spiritual selfishness, an attitude of mind based on self salvation. In other words, "while the prevailing emphasis in Buddhist ethics is on virtues which enable a man to cut himself loose from this life, or on virtues towards others which grow out of a life-denying -- rather than life-affirming -- attitude, the effect was after all the building up of a whole personality, as if this were regarded as of permanent value."² Yet why attempt to build up a "personality" if even to live is evil and Nirvana is the goal of human endeavor?

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 372, quoting Subhadra, Buddhist Catechism, p. 36.

²

Reischauer, Christianity and Northern Buddhism, p. 15.

But we must not stop here. Buddha practiced and taught genuine unselfishness in the many years of his ministry. Either we must consider this a desire to help mankind to greater happiness (which after all is but delaying later suffering, for life is essentially evil), or we may think that though Buddha felt the logic of his truths he realized, as Dr. Saunders says, that there were many to whom his ideas would be as so much "babel", so "for them he had a different technique and offered a different goal. 'Whatsoever householder desires to be reborn in a heaven, let him attach himself to me with faith and devotion,' says the Majjhima Nikaya (in Suttas of Pali Canon), 'but whatsoever monk would realize Nirvana, let him tread the noble Eightfold Path'; for the way of the mystic is a difficult and elusive way, open only to those who have the original spiritual genius to tread it, and who are prepared to give their whole time and attention to its pursuit. The layman may attain Nirvana; it is very unlikely that he will ever attempt it."¹ Rather than preach to all "Blessed be nothing" (i. e., no wanting nor having), he preached to the laity a positive doctrine of compassion and right living as the way to heaven.

Hence, though Buddha's intellectual logic led him

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Saunders, Christianity and Buddhism, p. 16.

to believe that all life is evil,¹ a saving inherent sense of values made him preserve the dignity of life, so that he spent most of his life attempting to wean men away from the lure of the lower passions and teaching them how to find greater satisfaction in a life of sympathy and kindness. We can always think of the founder of Buddhism as a man of sincerity, moral earnestness, deep sympathy and a certain nobility of soul. Few men have been more emphatic in teaching that the way of passion is enslavement and that the "wages of sin is death."²

Buddha's attitude toward deities is also a question of value and interest. Buddha never denied the existence of the Hindu gods, but he believed (as he believed in the existence of beings lower than man) in beings who had attained a higher level than man; namely, the gods. But these gods were only good men who were still in the grip of Karma and Rebirth; they were still bound to the "Wheel of Life", else they would not be considered as living and approachable. "The highest reality in Sakyamuni's thought is the impersonal moral Law, not a personal moral Being."³ But this was too intellectual

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Cf. Reischauer, Christianity and Northern Buddhism, p. 10

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Ibid., p. 14

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Ibid., p. 17.

a doctrine for Buddha's followers, and as Theism supplanted the Monism of the Upanishads, so later followers of Buddha, as the whole realm of Buddhist literature testifies, deified Buddha, and built up such a complicated system of former Buddhas and Adi-Buddha that to most Western minds their system of Buddhology is a veritable blind maze, with many approaches but no end. In addition to the deification of Buddha and the creation of other objects of worship, animism has crept into Buddhism, especially in Burma and Ceylon, where the "nats" and "devas" are an integral part of the life of the Buddhists. In Burma the "nats" were the original gods of the land, whom the Burmese now fear, though they turn to Buddha for help and love. In Ceylon the "devas" or "devatas" are borrowed from Hindu mythology and represent evil spirits who must be appeased by worship, though sacrifices and oblations are secondary to the worship of Buddha. But withal, one cannot but sigh and think how Buddhism has become corrupted. Would a student of Christianity think as ill of modern Christianity? I wonder.

Salvation is as important to Buddhists as to Hindus, if not more so. But the most that modern Buddhists hope for is a rebirth in a heaven or upon earth under favorable conditions. Buddha refused to answer questions concerning future existence, for he felt his mission

was not primarily to teach philosophy but to save mankind from sin. "The religious life does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal or infinite, or that saints exist after death. Whether these doctrines are true or false there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing.. I have not elucidated these questions because they profit not, they have not to do with the fundamentals of religion."¹ Yet we may learn something of the nature of salvation from Buddhist literature and modern conceptions. Salvation is of two sorts, which probably might pragmatically be combined into one. Buddha preached salvation by self-mastery through following the Eightfold Path, either attaining Nibbana by way of detachment (the Arhat ideal), or by the way of service, (the Bodhisattva ideal). But later developments deified Buddha and introduced other deities who were to help mankind in his struggle for salvation. This is akin to the Bodhisattva ideal, which recognizes man's need of help along the pathway. But so many "helpers" have been recognized since the time of Buddha that the approach seems of a different nature. It is hard for mankind to pull himself up by his own boot straps.

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 375, quoting from Warren, Buddhism in Translations, pp.117-122.

In any very extensive reading on Buddhism one will encounter the terms Nirvana and Nibbana, and though they are used of what is ultimately the same goal, the different aspects which they emphasize are worth noting. Nibbana is the older Pali word and is used of primitive Buddhism "which places the emphasis upon the dying out of the flame of Tanha, or craving (desire) and indicates that with this the transient world of Samsara (the wages of desire) comes to an end in an ineffable state of calm, cool joy beyond human categories."¹ It is used also by the Hinayana writers of "a later more negative age, who tend to place less emphasis upon ethical content and at times teach that it is the cessation not merely of becoming but of being."²

Nirvana is the Sanskrit word used in some parts of the Hindu Upanishads as the experience of union of one's soul, or Atma, with the Supreme Soul, or Brahman. The term is also used by Mahayana Buddhists who regard Nirvana "as a permanent supreme Reality, blissful and serene, though ineffable."³

The above explanation may throw some light upon the question of whether or not there is consciousness when one has attained "the Goal".

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Saunders, Epochs in Buddhist History, p. xvi.

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Ibid.

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Ibid.

"Most modern Buddhists, especially those of China and Japan (where Mahayana Buddhism prevails), would say that Sakyamuni did believe in the existence of the higher self and that the Nirvana state is void only of such things as make up the life of the empirical ego but that it is in reality a great 'Fulness'. I doubt (Dr. Reischauer writes) however whether this view can be scientifically established from the oldest and most reliable records of the Buddha's teachings (Cf. Nibbana in primitive Buddhism) though it is true that the Buddhist mystics of China and Japan usually put a positive content into their conception of the Nirvana state."¹ In accordance with Dr. Reischauer's opinion Dr. Pratt gives the following incident. "I quoted to a monk at Galle the definitions of Nirvana as 'eternal happiness' and 'eternal comfort' and he asserted stoutly that these views were absolutely mistaken. In his own picturesque words, Nirvana means 'finish'; -- 'comfort and happiness finish as well as discomfort and sorrow.'"²

Another monk whom Dr. Pratt interviewed had a more agnostic attitude, maintaining that Nirvana may have a kind of consciousness, and may contain a great deal of which we are entirely ignorant and at which we cannot even guess. We cannot be dogmatic. I would incline

¹ Reischauer, Christianity and Northern Buddhism, p. 9.

² Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 377.

³ Ibid.

toward Dr. Saunders's explanation that Mahayana Buddhists tend to consider Nirvana as a state of "conscious happiness", whereas Hinayana Buddhists might describe it in terms of "finished". Buddha was not an annihilationist, for Nirvana did not end all, but was the beginning of an experience for which mankind has no positive descriptive words. The "state" was probably impersonal, though attained by mystics following the Eightfold Path. It is evident that to-day few laymen expect, or even want, to attain Nirvana; as we said in the beginning of this discussion, their desire is to be reborn in a heaven--as Buddha himself is said to have suggested.

We have seen clearly enough that Buddha believed Nirvana to be attainable in this life, and such is the conception reflected in the Pitakas. Dr. J. B. Pratt reports that the two leaders of the Maha Bodhi movement in Ceylon are also emphasizing immediate attainment,¹ but in the generations between, the realization of Nirvana was at a very indefinite date, even for the mystics who were seeking it above all else. Subhadra's "Catechism"² makes a distinction between Nirvana, which is attainable in this life, and Pari Nirvana, which is attained only after the death of the last body and

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 378.

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A textbook used in some Buddhist schools; as authoritative a summary of Buddhism as can be found, according to Dr. Pratt, op. cit., p. 372.

is "complete dissolution of individuality, for nothing remains.....which in any way corresponds to the human conception of existence." This distinction between immediate and distant Nirvana may be valid, but I doubt that it is found very often outside of analytical treatises. I shall close this discussion of Nirvana, or salvation, by a quotation from Subhadra's book. "Nirvana is a state of mind and heart in which all desire for life or annihilation, all egoistic craving has become extinct.....It is a state of perfect inward peace, accompanied by the imperturbable certainty of having attained deliverance, a state words cannot describe, and which the imagination of the worldling tries in vain to picture to himself. Only one who has himself experienced it knows what Nirvana is."¹

The two Buddhist ideals, as we have indicated before are the Arahāt (Arhat) and the Bodhisat (Bodhisattva). The Arahāt is the mystic who has made his way up the Eightfold Path, attains Buddhahood and enters Nirvana. The Bodhisat is one who is worthy of Nirvana, but surrenders it to be reborn endlessly for the sake of ministering to mankind. "In the Bodhisattva doctrine we have, virtually, the belief in the survival of the human personality beyond the death of the individual. The Bodhisattva is one who through incarnation after incarnation

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 379.

gradually builds up a perfect personality. And when this has once been achieved, the Bodhisattva, though free from the bondage of this evil world, returns again and again to this world in order to help others."¹ This doctrine is however a Mahayana modification of original Buddhism, for it involves a real continuation of human personality and promise of personal immortality to those who in faith aspire toward being such a Bodhisattva.

The question then occurs to us, where is Buddha now? Again it is impossible to answer with one view of the matter. Many rather ignorant and thoughtless Buddhists, including some monks, conceive of Buddha, to all practical purposes, as a god who is leading a conscious and joyous existence, hearing the prayers of his followers and answering them as he sees fit. Though this conception is most inconsistent with real Buddhism, it is quite human and reasonable. The orthodox Buddhists believe, naturally, that Buddha is not 'living', that he is beyond consciousness as we understand the term, that he cannot do anything for this world since he is inactive, and that he lives only in his teachings. That he is in Nirvana now all Buddhists agree, though the Mahayanists believe that he should be "interpreted in terms of the Bodhisattva doctrine and his beautiful character accounted for only on the ground that he had through

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Reischauer, Christianity and Northern Buddhism, p. 23.

countless incarnations (Cf. Jataka tales) struggled upward in the path of moral living until he achieved the beautiful personal character that he was when he appeared in India."¹

Does Buddhism find a place for prayer or any natural expression of human praise and aspiration? Buddha denies the value of prayer, for his emphasis was on moral self-mastery, but that is another of his beliefs which has been modified beyond recognition. There are now those who pray to Buddha as the Blessed One, and expect him to answer. Or, if they feel him to be unfriendly, they pray to "nats" or "devas", or some of the lesser deities like Amitabha or Avalokitesvara. However, the logical Buddhist does away with petition as a part of prayer; but Dr. J. B. Pratt reports that many Buddhists believe both in the praise of Buddha as meretorious and in prayer as subjectively valuable. "A prayer for purity or peace is likely to bring about its own fulfillment especially if accompanied by the thought of Buddha as our ideal," said a monk in Rangoon.² But there is still a third theory which (Dr. Pratt believes) is held by most of the intelligent monks. He believes that this is essentially a moral universe in

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Reischauer, Christianity and Northern Buddhism, p. 23.

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 383 sq.

which a good act will be rewarded, but Buddha cannot answer prayer for he is in Nirvana. But prayer and offerings to Buddha are an infallible means of acquiring merit, which merit constitutes a sort of righteousness, and this righteousness will have its due reward. A neat theory, and surely better than none, but beyond its subjective value, prayer cannot be a very inspiring exercise.

Buddhism also has its celibate order of monks, though they are not ascetics in the Hindu sense of the term. These yellow-robed brethren are called Bhikkus, and the Sangha movement dates back to the time of Buddha himself, when his five first ascetic converts took their vows and started the band of Buddha's followers. The formula they repeat upon entering the order is:

" I take my refuge in the Buddha"

(repeated three times)

" I take my refuge in the Law"

(repeated three times)

" I take my refuge in the Sangha"

(repeated three times)

They also take five vows, (in addition to those subscribed to by the laity), which are:

(1) Not to eat solid food after mid-day.

(2) To abstain from dancing, singing, etc.; i. e. worldly amusements.

(3) To abstain from ornaments, perfumes, etc.

(4) To sleep on hard couches.

(5) To possess no money, but to live by begging.

These monks enjoy a carefree life, with time spent on meditation and the learning of Buddha's teachings. They live in monasteries or rock-hewn caves and are supported by the alms of the people, who obtain merit by contributing to the bhikkus' upkeep. They are a fairly moral group, the laity honor them, and their influence is mildly helpful.¹

Buddha's message to them was "Go ye, Bhikkus, and wander forth for the gain of the many, the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Proclaim, O Bhikkus, the doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure."²

The apparent conflict between Buddha's philosophy of self salvation from a world essentially evil and his life of service in such an evil world we have already mentioned. The precepts which he formulated for the laity (the Eightfold Path was essentially for mystics) were simple but livable. They are in brief:

(1) Not to take any life.

(2) Not to steal.

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 354.

²

Ibid., quoting from the Vinaya Pitaka.

- (3) To avoid sexual incontinence.
- (4) Not to lie, deceive, or slander.
- (5) Not to drink intoxicating liquors.

There is no doubt that these precepts have a very real influence on the life of the Buddhists.¹ The additional vows of the monks we have already mentioned. These ten might be called "Buddha's Decalogue." Like Jesus Christ, the Buddha summed up his teaching and his experience in a set of Beatitudes, which every school in Burma learns. We may easily glean more from it about Buddha's ethical teachings than from an involved discussion. "These Beatitudes are said to have been uttered at the request of a certain deva or god who drew near to the teacher as night fell and addressed him thus:

'What many men and deities,
Desiring bliss, have sought to find,
Come tell me, Master, what it is,
Which brings most blessing to mankind?'

To whom the sage made answer:

'To shun the fool, to court the wise,
This is the highest Paradise:

Pay ye respect where it is due,
So will true blessing wait on you:

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 348.

Seek a fit place and there remain,
Striving self-knowledge to attain:

If in past lives you've stored up merit,
The fruits thereof you'll now inherit:

Let wisdom, skill, and discipline,
And gracious kindly words be thine:

Tend parents, cherish wife and child,
Pursue a blameless life and mild:

Live thou devout, give ample alms,
Protect thy kin from life's alarms:

Do good, shun ill, and still beware
Of the red wine's insidious snare:

So do thou persevere in good:
This is the true Beatitude:

Be humble, with thy lot content,
Grateful and ever reverent:

Study the Law of Righteousness,
This is the path that leads to Bliss:

Be patient thou, the Saints frequent,
And ponder still their argument:

The Noble Truths, the life austere
And chaste that brings Nirvāna here:

The life from eightfold bond secure,
The life of peace that crowns the pure:

This is the Highest Bliss to find,
This the chief blessing of mankind.'

Such is the Teacher's summary of how to be happy."¹

Though we regret the emphasis placed on "merit" which makes "charity" of more value than "love", we cannot but respect the strength of Buddha's moral teaching, both because in its opposition to caste and other evils of Indian life it is far superior to Hindu ethics, and because Buddha by his life of service, devotion, and harmonious living, was a most worthy example of complete self-mastery.

SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

Hinayana:

Introduced by :

Date:

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Ceylon | Mahinda, son of Asoka | c. 250 B.C. |
| 2. Burma | Buddha? Asoka?
Buddhaghosa | c.5th century A.D. |

Mahayana:

- | | | |
|----------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 3. China | Buddhist teachers requested to come by Emperor Ming Ti | 1st century A.D. |
| 4. Korea | Missionaries from China | 4th century A.D. |
| 5. Japan | Missionaries from Korea | 552 A. D. |
| 6. Tibet | Two Buddhist wives of Chief
Buddhist Bhikkus | 7th century A.D.
8th century A.D. |

Having glanced at the spread of Buddhism, I hardly need to add, after all the contrasts which we have noted between Buddha's teachings and those current to-day, that the Buddhism of to-day is not the religion of Buddha. (Do I remember hearing the same statement about Christianity and Christ?) Deities and demons are worshipped, asceticism is practiced (especially in China), ceremonialism encrusts worship, in addition to the perversions of various philosophical doctrines. Reform movements however seem to be gathering force in all the Buddhist lands, the Young Men's Buddhist Association is active in Ceylon, Burma, and China. And at the last Buddhist assembly in China in 1925, under the able leadership of T'ai Hsu, plans were made for the propagation of Buddhism in America and Europe; and the Board of American and European Missions was established with a missionary training school in Shanghai.

Dr. K. J. Saunders, in preparing his pamphlet for the Jerusalem Conference, wrote to leaders in various Buddhist lands, including missionaries, converts, --to and from Buddhism--, and Buddhist priests. He asked them for testimonials concerning the motive power of Buddhism, its inherent values, and the present outlook. These documents are extremely valuable in giving us first-hand information, though the impressions one gains are of varied hue. The Buddhism of Burma and Ceylon seems to be of a cheerful sort, but it is losing its vital

hold on the lives of the people. Mahayana Buddhism in China and Japan is experiencing an intellectual readjustment, and a religious revival, though hindered by some of the sects which rely upon magic and exorcism. Buddhism has lived because it is "an attempt to meet human needs and to comfort human hearts,....it is alive because it has not wholly failed."¹ As a Japanese Christian has written, "Japanese Christianity seems much better on its formal and social sides than Buddhism, but I question how much greater Christianity, as it is in Japan to-day is in its inner depth and spiritual experience. I maintain that we must appreciate the greatness of Buddhism in its inner spiritual and experimental life."²

Section 4. ISLAM.

It is a majestic sweep from the Rig Vedic Hymns to the Koran -- a span of well nigh two thousand years. As we take up a brief study of Islam we feel ourselves in quite a different atmosphere, for we are to deal with a Semitic, as opposed to an Aryan, faith. Though the Semites belong to the "East", they are of the Near East, hence they are a mixture of both so-called Eastern and Western characteristics. To a Westerner the Near East

¹

Saunders, Christianity and Buddhism, p. 19

²

Ibid., p. 37, quoting H. Kaneko San.

is slow-moving to a fault, loving meditation, peace, and comfort too well; but to the Far Easterner most of the Near Easterners are strangely aggressive, war-like and materially minded. The difference in temperament is probably due to European infiltrations and the Ottoman Turks, as well as the geographical features of the land, and the religion from out of the desert which is professed by the majority of the Near Easterners.¹

The three Semitic religions are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and all three have characteristics in common.²

- (1) The exaltation of God and the subordination of nature.

The spiritual tendency to picture God as a Great Being makes the Oriental minimize natural laws and be indifferent to their permanency. It is not strange that those who have such a view of life should believe in supernatural occurrences and conceive of God as able and willing to upset all natural law. (Contrast Hindu Karma, p. 36.)

- (2) A dependence upon God, which often leads to predestination and fatalism.

(The result is somewhat the same as Hindu Karma although the explanation given is different and relates only to this life.)

1

The "Near East" includes Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Persia, and Mesopotamia.

2

Voices from the Near East, p. 7 sq.

(3) A belief in inspiration and prophecy, with a long line of prophets of a monotheistic God.¹

(Contrast Hindu pantheism, polytheism, and henotheism.)

(4) A belief in an external abode of happiness which is attained immediately after death,² if one is deserving.

Islam is the youngest founded religion among the important faiths of the world, and is third largest in number of adherents, claiming about 240,000,000, which indicates a stupendous rate of growth. The word Islam comes from the verb to "yield" or "submit", and a Muslim, or Moslem, is one who has "yielded".

According to Mohammed "Islam meant an unqualified admission to the theocracy set up by it, and a full participation in its rights and privileges, and an absolute extinction of all differences based on race, nationality, or color."³ The "House of Islam" includes all those who believe in Allah and Mohammed as his prophet. Such faith involves no rigid social system, but it is characteristic of Moslems (as it is probably of Buddhists and Hindus, but not of Christians) that

¹ After Amos, c. 800 B. C.

² More especially true of Christianity and Islam.

³ Jeffery, Mecca Pilgrimage, p. 76, in International Review of Missions, January, 1925.

their religious loyalty to brother Mohammedans is far more binding than national ties, except in Turkey where a Turk has always been thought of as a Moslem, and, at present, loyalty to "Turkey" has supplanted religious affinities. Islam has always been a missionary faith and to-day Moslems are to be found in the East Indies; Africa; Asia, including Russia, Turkestan, Afghanistan, Beluchistan, India, China; and many of the Pacific Islands. Islam is second only to Christianity in geographical distribution.

There is probably no religious leader about whom so much is accurately known as Mohammed. Though I do feel that a large amount of sentimental material has been written about the Mohammedan faith, there are many who have made a scientific study of his life and message. He is, I think, among the most interesting historical figures, both because of the difficulty of understanding his personality, and because he must have been a strong figure to enlist such wholehearted devotion as was accorded him by his followers.

Mohammed was born in Mecca, Arabia, in 570 A. D. His father, Abdullah, died before he was born, and his mother left him when he was about five years of age, so the tender youth was entrusted to the care of his uncle, Abu-Talib. Much of his early life was spent among Bedouins of the desert and there he gained a love for vast spaces which never left him. At the age of eighteen

he entered the employ of a wealthy lady named Khadijah as a caravan driver along the Arabian peninsula, Syria, Irak, and Egypt. So well did he perform his duties that after a few years this lady, though some nineteen years older, married him. Strangely enough, this was a very happy union, and some state that had it not been for the encouragement and sympathy of his wife, Islam might never have been established. In comfortable circumstances, Mohammed lived until about the age of forty, when he entered upon his religious career. As a child he had been subject to occasional epileptic fits, but these were regarded by the tribesmen as a sign of special divine favor, and hence never detracted from his reputation.

As he advanced in years, being of a reflective and imaginative nature he often used to retire to the wilderness for meditation weeks at a time. An especially favorite spot of his was a cave at the base of Mt. Hira. Doubtless the subject of much of his meditation was the degeneration and baseness of the current tribal worship of some four hundred deities, which centered at his town of Mecca. Mohammed had undoubtedly come in contact with Christians on his travels, and something of their doctrines were known to him, though in a very garbled and debased form. Gradually there grew upon him the conviction that there was but one

God--communion with the vastness of nature in the desert might well have stimulated such a concept. Such a conclusion was not a mere intellectual process; he did not merely come to possess it, but it possessed him. In 610, while sojourning at the cave, he had a vision in which the Spirit told him to proclaim this message to his fellow-men. While filled with the experience of God, Mohammed doubted, for six months at least, whether he was really commissioned to proclaim such a gospel. But a second vision came to him chiding him for his faithlessness. Such reassurance, plus the sympathy of his wife, gave Mohammed faith to proceed. For twelve years he labored in Mecca, recruiting only about 150 followers -- the question soon evolved into a family dispute, and Mohammed's effectiveness was curtailed. In 622 an opportunity presented itself to go to Medina, some 160 miles away, where there was a nucleus of twelve faithful ones. Mohammed made of this journey a strategic flight in which it appeared that he was fleeing from persecution. This year, called the year of the Hejira, is the year 1 in the Moslem calendar.

In Medina Mohammed rapidly allied forces around him, and in three years time captured Mecca and transferred the center of activity to that city. This was a politic move, for to the surrounding tribes that city was the

center of their worship, and to it they journeyed once a year if possible. One of his converts was an able soldier, Abu Bekr, and under his tutelage the religion spread with phenomenal rapidity. Mohammed probably at first did not conceive of his religion as being universal, but success led him on.

The sincerity of Mohammed is a mooted question. A study of the Koran reveals a great difference between the Meccan suras and the Medina utterances, the former being of loftier tone, reflecting greater inspiration and more poetic expression. The consensus of scholarly opinion seems to be that Mohammed had undoubtedly a tremendous religious experience, and while he was at Mecca, as a humble citizen of the land, his sincerity and religious fervor were quite genuine; but as he came into political power he failed to cultivate and cherish his religious contacts, and his inspired utterances became but little more than political edicts. Mohammed was "not a systematic thinker, but an Oriental visionary, brought up in crass superstition, without intellectual discipline; nervous temperament, worked on by ascetic austerities, irritated by opposition." We must not condemn him too harshly; as a man of his time he was well in advance of his contemporaries and had the vision of one God triumphant and supreme. But he was not big enough to live the message he first preached.

The rapidity of the spread of the faith may be accounted for partially because becoming a Moslem involved no special sacrifice of principles, but rather a favorable allegiance with a politically ascending group. Furthermore, Islam was an authoritative faith, and prescribed by rule what each one should do, leaving little room for troublesome debating over principles. One cannot go into the expansion of Islam extensively except to say that only one hundred years after the prophet's death in 632, Charles Martel fought the decisive victory at Tours, saving Europe from the so-called Moslem menace. Even so Mohammed's "followers were masters of an empire greater than Rome at the zenith of her power. They were building mosques in China, Spain, Persia, and Southern India!"¹

The religious leadership of Islam came to be vested (through a series of political and religious intrigues) in the Sultan of Turkey, but since his deposition, the Moslem world has been in a quandry as to where the leadership should reside. Ibn Saoud, leader of the Wahabhis of Arabia, is making strong claims for restoring the Caliphate to Arabia, which seems, to most Westerners, quite reasonable.

Moslems are divided into myriads of sects but the two most important and historic groups are the Sunnis

¹
Zwemer, Islam, p. 55.

and the Shiah. The Sunnis far outnumber the Shiah; they are ardent followers of tradition and are opposed to all innovations. The Shiah assert that Ali (the adopted son of Mohammed and the first convert after Khadijah) should have been the first Caliph instead of Abu Bekr (Mohammed's general). The chief difference between the two sects is the doctrine of the Imamate. "This consists in the belief that the 'light of Mohammed' descended to Ali and from him passed to the true Imams or religious leaders."¹ The last of the twelve Imams is supposed to be still alive but hidden from view. The Shiah only number about 12,000,000 and are mostly in Persia.

From the earliest days of Islam there has existed among Moslems an inclination towards mysticism. Dr. Duncan MacDonald asserts that there are three bases of religious life: tradition, reason, and inner light. Reason, in terms of philosophy, Islam discredits; tradition is considered a channel of religious faith but "it is the knowledge of religious things that comes directly and immediately to the individual soul, apart from any tradition, apart from any reasoning,"² a mystical Inner Light, which has come to be the basis for all thoughtful religious faith.

This mysticism is called Sufism, and sufis are comparable to mystics except that they belong exclusively

¹ Zwemer, Islam, p. 139.

² MacDonald, Aspects of Islam, p. 150.

to Islam. The particular exponents of this mystical attitude, apart from the individual sufis, are the Dervish Orders, which are now one of the most powerful factors in Islam in unifying and conserving its religious life. The Dervishes are absolutely obedient to their spiritual leaders, or Sheikhs, and the various orders are bound together by secret oaths and symbolism. None of the orders are celibate, except the Bektashis, and all are open to the laity. Each dervish order has its club center where the people gather in a semi-social and religious way once or twice a week to observe the rites connected with that specific group, rites which have a definite and well-calculated psychological and emotional effect upon the participant.

By far the most important literary document of Islam is the Koran (Qu'ran). "The Koran admittedly occupies an important position among the great religious books of the world. Though the youngest of the epoch-making works belonging to this class of literature, it yields to hardly any in the wonderful effect which it has produced on large masses of men. It first transformed a number of heterogeneous desert tribes of the Arabian peninsula into a nation of heroes, and then proceeded to create the vast politico-religious organizations of the Muhammedan world which are one of the great forces with which Europe and the East have to

reckon to-day. The secret of the power exercised by the book lay in the mind which produced it."¹

The word Koran means "utterance" and the book is composed of one hundred and fourteen chapters arranged according to length, with the longest first,[#] regardless of chronological sequence. Mohammed called himself the "unlettered prophet"--doubtless he had some education, but reading and writing may have been beyond him. The utterances were probably dictated, and were not collected and edited until some years after his death, by one of his secretaries, Zaid. The book was not at first considered infallible, but just as tradition has ascribed miracles to Mohammed which he never performed, so the book has come to be considered as of unquestionable infallibility. Only recently have any Moslems permitted or recognized the place of literary criticism of their Book. Many even believe that a translation is not valid.

The style of the book is very uneven, yet "There is a unity of thought, a directness and simplicity of purpose, a peculiar and laboured style, a uniformity of diction, coupled with a certain deficiency of imaginative power..."² Its rhythm and redundancy make it difficult for the Westerner to appreciate; but as written in Arabic the book is a classic as to style and language, and Moslems find in it the perfection of art and literature.

¹

Rodwell, Translation of Koran, p. vii, Introduction by Margouliouth.

²

Ibid., p. 13

[#]Excepting the Fatihah.

The first Sura given in the Koran is the Fatihah, or the "Opening of the Book". It is used as a prayer much as we use the Lord's Prayer.

"Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!

The compassionate, the merciful!

King on the day of reckoning!

Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help.

Guide Thou us on the straight path,

The path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious;--with whom thou art not angry, and who go not astray." ¹

Sura 96 is supposed to record his first intimations of divine leading, and the first five verses of the 94th his "call" after his period of doubt.

There is also a large body of literature including the writings by the Sunni and Shiah sects supporting their traditions; the Shariat, or book of the law; and the ecstatic writings of the mystics; but though containing many valuable sections, it is all of secondary importance.

"La illaha illa 'llah" -- so reads the simple creed of two hundred and fifty four millions² of peoples, and may everlasting tribute be paid to Mohammed for restoring

¹

Rodwell, Translation of Koran, p. 28.

²

Estimates of the numbers of Moslems vary from 234,000,000 to 254,000,000. The large figure includes Moslems in southeastern Europe not considered in the estimate on page 80.

and reestablishing midst scenes of corrupt polytheism, the belief in the unity of God.

"In the name of the merciful and compassionate God.

Say, 'He is God alone.'

God the Eternal!

He begets not and is not begotten!

Nor is there like unto Him anyone!'"¹

We observe here the magnificence of God, the unity of His Being; we visualize Him as enthroned on high, like unto Whom no one exists.

As Islam means "to yield", so is this submission quite in accord with the Moslems' faith in their God, or Allah, who is a force outside themselves, who is living, omniscient, omnipotent, irresistible in will, yet who hears, sees and speaks. When we turn to the ninety-nine names for Allah we find a good commentary on their conception, and from this list ideas of gentleness and kindness are not absent; though such aspects have not been emphasized.

In addition to the belief in Divine Unity, every Moslem must believe in the Mission of Mohammed, and, consequently, must have implicit faith in the Koran as the sacred book embodying the unquestionably inspired utterances of their prophet concerning all the political,

¹

Sura 112.

personal, social, economic, and religious relationships of man. According to Ameer Ali, a true Moslem need believe in no more than the Unity of God and the Mission of Mohammed,¹ while observance of ritual and disciplinary rules may be waived, but it is commonly agreed that there are four other pillars of the faith, in addition to the belief in the Creed.

The call to prayer, five times per day, is an index to one of the most potent psychological strongholds of Islam. Formal communion with the Unseen, be it by the use of words merely hollowly repeated and rarely understood, or by the performing of the genuflections and rites called "namaz", or by a humble prayer offered up from the recesses of the heart,² all these customs are among the most outstanding features of a Moslem's daily religious life. Worship in the mosque is a peculiar combination of congregational and individual praise to Allah. Those who gather at the mosque have no personal relation to the "mullah" who conducts the worship, no allegiance to any one mosque as distinct from another. The "mullah" in turn has no jurisdiction over those who worship there during the day, nor pastoral interest in their religious welfare. The mosque is there, stripped of human personal associations and relationships, yet often filled with a beautiful, uplifting sense of God's nearness,

¹

Ali, Islam, p. 6.

²

Ibid., p. 9.

which even an "unbeliever" can feel. A satisfaction of the natural desire for community worship is achieved through membership in the dervish orders which are open to the laity. It is not essential that the routine prayer observances be carried on only in the mosque--every devout Moslem will pause where he is at the time of the "call to prayer", face toward Mecca and go through the prescribed forms. When worshipping in a mosque, there are ablutions, again of a routine order, which the Prophet ordered performed, and, according to Ameer Ali,¹ these rites promote hygienic and sanitary conditions, the value of which, I presume many Christians would say, is better than nothing!

Every Moslem has a simple faith in democracy among peoples of his own faith, regardless of race or color, which no Western nation has even yet approached. Race or class prejudice is practically unknown, as, for example, during the pilgrimage, a fair Russian prince may be the intimate companion of a Moroccan soldier, with no thought of their differences in station, but rather with a warm comradeship based upon the faith which binds them together. In close accord with this cordial spirit of Brotherhood among fellow believers is a constant concern for the physical welfare of those less fortunately situated. "Be good to parents and to kindred and to orphans, and to the poor, and to a neighbour, whether kinsman or newcomer,

¹ Ali, Islam, p. 10.

and to the slaves whom your right hand holds."¹ This attitude has its negative effect in sanctioning and fostering a large mendicant order, yet the "poor and needy" are in theory, and often in practice, comparatively well cared for, especially the orphans.

The month of Ramadhan, or Ramazan, falling at various times in our Western calendar due to the dictates of the Moslem year, based upon lunar months, is a prescribed period of fasting. "O ye that have believed, a fast is ordained for you.....that ye may practice piety, a fast of a computed number of days. But he who among you who shall be ailing or on a journey shall fast an equal number of other days; and they that are able to keep it and do not shall make atonement by maintaining a poor man."² This period of fasting is observed by abstaining from eating, smoking and drinking from sunrise to sunset, though from sunset to sunrise all manner of feasting is customary. In this custom of observing the fast religiously, as well as the performing of the "namaz", it seems to me there is an element quite similar to that which we find in the Catholic "confessions", and Buddhist "merit"; i. e., of being mechanically absolved from the moral consequences of past sins by present penitential acts; an attitude of "wiping the slate clean", not because of divine compassion and forgiveness, but by the merits of certain formal acts.

¹ Ali, Islam, p. 25, quoting from the Koran.

² Ibid., p. 21, quoting from the Koran.

Every Moslem who can afford to do so must make the pilgrimage to Mecca once during his life, preferably during the month of Ramazan. This custom has tremendous religious and political significance in making the Moslems feel the vast extent of the territory covered by their faith, and a psychological value in stimulating and heightening the religious emotions, sometimes almost to the point of fanaticism. A "hadji" upon returning to his community has tremendous prestige of a social nature, and rarely fails to exert his newly acquired powers over those who seek him for advice, and often stimulates greater religious zeal among his associates. It is the dream of every sincere Moslem that he may some day make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the personal sacrifices endured to make such a trip possible testify to the power of his religion over his daily life.

An all important and potent element in Moslem faith is a firm belief in future existence. Opponents of Islam describe this existence as grossly material and devoid of any spiritual content. Ameer Ali goes to the other extreme and allegorizes all references to material welfare, explaining that the picture of Heaven had to be couched in terms which the believer would understand.¹ How would a Moslem picture our Heaven if he read only Revelations? "Every son of man is

¹ Ali, Islam, p. 14.

responsible to his Lord for the use he makes of his life,"¹ hence every follower will be judged at the time of the Great Account, which I interpret to mean death, and his future happiness determined accordingly. But since God is merciful, he will temper the judgment with kindness that it may not be too trying, but rather a purifying and cleansing process preparatory to the perfect union with God.

There is an elusive element of fatalism in the life of a Moslem, which, though hard to define, is like a stone wall in its permanence and strength. This is epitomized in the phrase "Kismet" or "Luck", a belief which in some cases crushes initiative and makes for an unprogressive group, such as the women of India, and on the other hand eradicates from many lives an unwholesome element of fear of the Unknown. All acts are regarded as the will of God, and accordingly he will provide for His followers as He deems best.

If, then, a man believe in the unity of God, responds to the five daily calls to prayer, gives alms to the poor and loves his Moslem brother, fasts during Ramazan and goes to Mecca we may say that he is a devout Moslem.

To the question of how much religious freedom there is in Islam every Moslem will glibly quote "Let there be no compulsion in religion,"² but over against this attitude let us consider "Say to the infidels: If they

¹ Ali, Islam, pp.16ff.

² Sura ii:257.

desist from their unbelief, what is now past shall be forgiven to them; but if they return to it, they have already before them the doom of the ancients."¹ Before criticizing Moslems too severely for converting by the power of the sword, let us remember that during the medieval period Christianity was known as a more cruel and intolerant religion than Islam. Despite Mohammed's prohibition of the use of compulsion in religion, Islam is known to-day as very intolerant of unbelievers and as hostile to the extent of severely persecuting apostates to Christianity, or any other religion. Their attitude is: "He who departs from Islam, becoming disobedient to God and his Apostle, let him be cut off or crucified or destroyed from the earth."² Every Moslem unconsciously feels -- it almost seems to be instinctive -- that he is superior in life and thought to any infidel or unbeliever, no matter what his faith or race.

The Moslem's historical attitude toward Christianity is most interesting. They believe that 104 "books" were sent from heaven in the following order: 10 to Adam, 50 to Seth, 30 to Enoch, 10 to Abraham, to Moses the Torah, to David the Zaboor, and to Jesus the Injil, or New Testament. These last three are in very corrupt form now, and have been supplanted by the Koran. Among

¹ Sura viii: 39

² Cash, Moslem World in Revolution, p. 119.

their major prophets they include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, but Mohammed surpasses them all. In their minor prophets they include eighteen Old Testament figures, John, Lukman, Zu-el-kifi, and Alexander the Great! The Moslems feel that the Christian conception of the Trinity and the Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary is nothing but polytheism of the worst sort. Though Islam does admit these Judaistic and Christian elements, as we have already indicated, their present attitude is one of contempt and superiority.

The ethics of Islam have often been under fire. One cannot honestly point to Mohammed, especially in his later years, as an example of right living, any more than one can consider Krishna as the ideal of India to-day. We must recognize, however, the times in which he (as well as Krishna before him) lived. Before Mohammed's time, in Arabia, a man was allowed to have nine wives with impunity, but Mohammed limited him to four, instructing that the wives should be well provided for. Women always had political rights in Moslem countries, and, though divorce was easy, could take their dowries with them if their husbands let them go. Mohammed also made provisions for the kindly treatment of slaves and orphans. Furthermore the drinking of intoxicating liquors was absolutely forbidden. If the

ethical system of Islam had been flexible these elements of strength might have developed as civilization advanced.

Islam has always been a missionary faith, not so much through especially appointed workers, but by efforts of individuals, traders, and merchants, who spread the faith as they travelled. "The trader or soldier or official when he enters non-Moslem territory does not wait for an ordained man to come along; he sees to it that some sort of praying place is fixed upon, and there he gives to the surrounding people the witness of his picturesque devotions."¹ This individual missionary zeal is partly due to the fact that Islam has no ordained clergy, apart from the dervishes, for the "mullahs" and "ulemas" of the mosque are elected by the community to positions in the mosque, to last only as long as they serve satisfactorily. In India however there are itinerant preachers, and they are converting large numbers to Islam.²

There are to-day liberal tendencies in Islam, for many Moslems realize that a faith crystallized in the seventh century A. D. must adapt itself to our present-day standards. Islam is "on trek"--the question is, naturally, where is the goal? Religious and political unrest is apparent, especially in Turkey and Europe, and

¹ Gairdner, Christianity and Islam, p. 16.

² Pratt, India and Its Faiths, pp. 29, sq.

the Pan Islamic sense of unity is breaking. The liberal tendencies are especially apparent in India under the leadership of the Ahmadiyya movement, and Aligarh University. Heretic Turkey has abrogated religion entirely. The conservative and fanatical element is centered in Arabia, where the Wahabis hold sway, and in Al Azhar University, Cairo. As in Buddhism, the Islam of to-day is not the same as the religion of Mohammed, for foreign elements like Sufism, saint worship, the glorification of Mohammed, and the beginnings of a clergy have been creeping in. However that may be, Islam to-day is not only "on trek" but on trial.

Chapter III

PERMANENT VALUES

After the well-nigh unending maze we have travelled we are at last approaching "the goal"! I shall now attempt to gather up, from the various sections of our study, points which I feel are definitely of value and relevant to our study of "permanent values."

Section 1. "THE LURE OF THE ORIENT"

There are characteristics of India which, as I read, I would term "the lure of the Orient." It is quite possible that these qualities are due to geographical location and climatic conditions, but since religion in India is so closely woven into daily life, it seems quite possible that religious attitudes are indirectly responsible.

Of inestimable value is India's unshakable faith in the spiritual order. If this conception could be formulated into an Indian creed it might read; "I believe in the soul. I believe in its endless progress as it takes its way through the changing forms, in worlds that rise and pass. I believe that the material world with all it has of luxury and wealth and with it the human body itself are but means in the education and requirement of the soul, and that whenever they stand in the way of the soul's progress they must be renounced and

despised" -- and most of India would add "I believe that the human soul may enter into or is already and forever in immediate communion with the Divine."¹

Tagore says, accusingly, "You Americans have no leisure, or if you have, you know not how to use it. In the rush of your lives you do not stop to consider where you are rushing to, nor what it is all for. The result is that you have lost the vision of the Eternal."² The "vision" the West seems to have in the eyes of most Orientals is of a Croesus valiantly transforming feverish work into material gold and silver, while hungry souls languish and wither for want of spiritual sustenance. "It is no small boast of the Indian that in his land alone in the mad world those who are regarded as the spiritual leaders of society (Brahmins) are by universal agreement given a place unquestionably superior to the warrior and ruler, while the social position of every one is supposed to depend not on wealth or power but on the degree of his inner development."³ While the Brahmins are accorded spiritual leadership, the Bhikkus give to India an excellent, though often extreme, example of the subordination of the flesh in their ascetic practices. Thus we see that throughout India, though there are many specific instances to the contrary, the general trend is to place supreme faith in the spiritual order of the universe.

¹ Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 475.

² Ibid., p. 473.

³ Ibid., p. 124.

There is also a rare charm, grace and simplicity about Indian life. The ideal of daily life is found not in "busyness" but upeka or calm. We doubtless could find time for meditation if we knew how, but we are afraid of a few unoccupied moments and hasten to fill them with futile diversions. I have read, also, that there is a lack of self-consciousness among Orientals, as is evidenced by the Moslems at prayer, who have no thought of how their "namaz" might appear to outsiders, but only of the praise and devotion which they seek to render Allah. There is value in emphasizing the worth of the individual personality, but there is a similar danger in overestimating the importance of one's own self. This subordination of self some Orientals have attained, and some have not. Jesus said, "Except ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven." It is such simplicity and lack of affectation which the East may help us to cultivate.

If I should say that India revered womanhood, many would laugh me to scorn, yet Dr. Pratt says that he feels that women of India possess an innate modesty which creates an attitude of respect toward them on the part of the men of the household. "One could easily spend a life-time in India and never see a woman indecently clad nor one whose actions were in any way immodest. More than that: he might go to a native theater repeatedly

and never see an erotic or suggestive play.....The Indians are relatively naive and child-like compared to us in the West What the inner state of the Indian's mind may be I do not know. But I know that he has a sense of outer decency which we of the West might well borrow from him."¹ One could cite the immoral practices of the temples, and the degrading status of women, in opposition to the above, but certainly there is a germ of truth in the suggestion that the sense of decency in India is not as depraved as we tend to suppose.

Another enviable quality India seems to have woven into the texture of her life is the practice of harmlessness, which we have already mentioned (p. 40). Anyone in the West who has pacifist tendencies and wishes to see war abolished from the face of the earth might attempt to inculcate a bit of the spirit of ahimsa in our warlike hearts.

And India seems to have such a delicate sense of the fitness of things. In the daily round all acts are given a religious interpretation, and the beauty of nature is recognized as the handiwork of the same Benign Force which permeates life. If there were a Niagara Falls in India it would probably be consecrated to some deity, and made a place for a holy pilgrimage. We harness the water power to make Shredded Wheat Biscuits.

¹

Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 465.

Section 2. HINDUISM.

In an imaginary story of the conversion of a Christian missionary to humility and the turning of a Hindu priest to Christianity the writer makes the following suggestion: "Brother, the world to-day needs new gods or at least a thorough regeneration of the old. Let us go together, you and I, into the forest, and meditate..... You shall speak of man that is the avatar of God, and I of the Son of Man that was the Christ; you of God's dancing and I of his dying; you of the Transmigration of Souls, and I of the Resurrection of the Body; and we will decide whether to speak the language of this or that old faith refashioned or of a new one that shall embrace and harmonize the truth, and reject the error of all."¹

In considering the specific contributions of Hinduism let us first glance at two testimonies from Hindus themselves as to the present outlook in India. "Surely Hindustan with its love for the spiritual, its genius for religion, its wide tolerance and catholicity of interests and its emphasis on bhakti has something which when brought into the Kingdom of Christ will be of abiding value to the whole world."²

Hindu philosophy may not necessarily be correct,

¹ Atlantic Monthly, February, 1927, p. 182.

² Parekh, An Indian Approach to India, p. 15.

but we must admit that India has a natural gift for understanding and developing philosophical thought. A philosopher of India says, "I am not very hopeful about the future of Hinduism as such, but I do pray fervently that its inmost spirit, its Atmavidya, its science of the Soul, may not be lost altogether, and that its Theory of Life may pass to new races and younger and more vigorous peoples."¹

Christian missionaries can ill afford to go to India with no foundation of philosophical knowledge, be it in Eastern or Western schools of thought. Life can become overburdened with philosophy, but, without a consideration of the ultimate origin and aim of life one cannot attain a very harmonious adjustment to life as we meet it. Hinduism's training in ways of thought has also given her a tolerance, too much of which is dangerous, but a generous portion of which is essential if one is to encounter and interpret the multitudinous attitudes toward life assumed by mankind.

In the Hindu Dharma we find a logical social system, excellent from the point of view of stability. Furthermore it does build up strong ties, within groups, which tend to keep society in workable and manageable units, with little confusion and outward strife. Yet caste

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 475.

must go, but the Western missionary must be careful how he tells the Hindu that "the old order changeth."

If caste is to go, India must find in its place a system which is as logical, as stable, and as suitable to existing conditions as the caste system was in the building. India will not be fooled by Western platitudes concerning the practicability of Christian ethics, and if we wish to have her adopt and practice a system of real brotherhood we must demonstrate to her that it is possible. The Japanese Exclusion Act is not very helpful at this point.

The same is true of the doctrines of Karma and Transmigration. I am not at all sure that these conceptions must be abolished. Karma is a systematic answer to the problem of suffering and sin. While it is not perfect, it takes cognizance of the natural laws of cause and effect, and is in this way far more scientific than our Semitic Christianity. Similarly the theory of Transmigration, whether it was so intended or not, takes into account the evidence of heredity, and certainly bears out the theory of continuity. Two words are now gripping the soul of India, according to Dr. E. S. Jones; these words are service and self-sacrifice. If these ideals could be introduced into Hinduism to combat the paralyzing effects of Karma, then I feel

their doctrines would be essentially practicable as well as more humanitarian. And I am sure that India's sense of proportion and balance, as well as cause and effect, is greatly to be coveted. Science is striving to convince us of what India has known these many ages.

Finally, in her meditative spirit, which is closely allied to the sense of proportion and the practice of upeka, India has achieved an indifference to Time which is an excellent antidote to the Western craze for speed. Doctors to-day are telling "nervous wrecks" who come to them for advice, that had they given themselves time to live peacefully their bodies could have withstood the demands of life. But in addition to the health value of meditation, moments of "quietness" help one to attain an interpretation of life wherein events assume their proper positions and "first things" are placed first, not last.

These, to me, are some of the central values of Hinduism. "After a long winter of some centuries we are to-day in one of the creative periods of Hinduism. We are beginning to look upon our ancient faith with fresh eyes.....Leaders of Hindu thought and practice are convinced that the times require, not a surrender of the basic principles of Hinduism, but a restatement of them with special reference to the needs of a more complex and mobile social order. Such an attempt

will only be a repetition of a process which has occurred a number of times in the history of Hinduism. Growth is slow when roots are deep."¹

Section 3. BUDDHISM.

We have already noticed that there are parallels between Buddha and Christ in that the religion of the founders has been greatly modified by the centuries. In judging of Buddhism's values I shall take into consideration both what Buddha taught and the current practice, for there are neglected teachings and subsequent additions in Buddhism, as well as in Christianity. Both the old and the new possess elements of positive value.

Buddhism, in the philosophical realm, is essentially an appeal to reason. In Hinduism we have a considerable element of authority, divine revelation, incarnation, etc., whereas original Buddhism put one's faith on the basis of experience. "The center of gravity in religion has shifted from authority to experience.....The fundamental principles of mystical religion are now very widely accepted, and are, especially with educated people, avowedly the main ground of belief."² According to Dean Inge Buddha must have been well educated, for

¹ Radhakrishnan, Hindu View of Life, p. 130.

² Ibid., p. 60, quoting Inge, Platonic Tradition, p. 115.

he made his mystical experience the basis of his faith in Dharma, or moral Law. With such a basis for the judging of religious attitudes, dogmatism is impossible and individual religion becomes flexible and capable of growth. This elasticity is lacking in both Hinduism and Islam, to their detriment.

Buddhism offers us an answer to the problem of suffering, an answer which is more analytical than the one given by Hinduism. Job¹ is the Jews' answer to this problem, written at just about one hundred years after Buddha formulated his fearless diagnosis and cure. Buddha's answer is not perfect, neither is Job's, and though the Teacher believed in the extinction of all human desire, he turned to a life of service. Even so, though Christianity cannot answer the problem of why we suffer, her answer is, use your suffering to develop your inner resources. That seems to me virtually what Buddha did; granted that desire was the root of suffering, he made it his chief desire to help others, thereby enriching his own personality.

To Buddhism we also owe a helpful emphasis upon the inwardness of true morality. Somehow I thrill at Buddha's emphasis upon self mastery. It breathes the same spirit of independence as Henley's Invictus.

¹
400 B. C. or later.

"I am the Master of my Fate;

I am the Captain of my Soul."

But Buddha is not arrogant in his independence -- he realized that humility is a necessary virtue. In his Eightfold Path he stressed, not external conduct, but "right mindedness" -- an inner relationship to outward circumstances.

"To wander through the fair fields of Buddhist history, to see the noble products of its compassionate spirit, and to read its great masterpieces is to be witness to the workings of the Eternal Spirit....

(we) will realize that Buddhism is at once a religion with a noble ethic, a many-sided philosophy and the inspiration to great social and political achievements."¹

Section 4. ISLAM.

Islam is similar to Christianity in its Semitic origins, hence there are not so many clear-cut differences, and the faith of the Moslems is not so hard to understand. Baron Carra de Vaux says "Islam and the Orient should not be confused. Islam is a religion and the Orient a region where this religion flourishes; because of our very interest nowadays in the history and comparison of

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Saunders, Gospel for Asia, p. 198.

religions we tend to exaggerate the influence of religion; certain characteristics of Islam are due more to the land than to the faith; such characteristics as fatalism, a habit of contemplation, zest for poetry and philosophy, the artistic temperament, the quest of calm, are not peculiarly Islamic but are more dependent upon climate.....Western prowess and superior science may have given us certain advantages over the Orient;..... although we may have surpassed the East in science and in material force we have not surpassed it in wisdom."¹ According to the above, then, we must not attribute to religion differences in racial temperament; but rather to climate and geographical location. Religion and life are not as closely interwoven in Moslem lands as in India, if I can judge correctly, so it is possible that many of the differences between Islam and Christianity are due largely to environmental conditions; i. e., Islam in the United States would be interchangeable with Christianity, and the influence of Christianity in the Near East would be no different than the present influence of Islam. But this is a subtly dangerous line of argument. Personality is a greater moulder of men than geography, and I think the differences in Christianity and Islam are due to their founders. Near Eastern

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Archer, reviewing Les Penseurs de L'Islam by Baron Carra de Vaux, International Review of Missions, January, 1928.

Christianity is usually superior to Near Eastern Islam, given the same climate!

But whether it be climate or religion, there are embedded in the Near East those enviable qualities of calm repose, and a meditative spirit which begets a peace and satisfaction of the soul. In addition, the Near East possesses enough Semitic aggressiveness to make it progressive in terms of material welfare. Turkey and Egypt have broken the fetters which have bound them for these many centuries and are facing a new day. In this new day there is much of the old shell of Islam which they will want to discard, yet there is also much that they must cherish.

Islam's bequest to mankind is her firm faith in One God. Moslems have gone so far as to prohibit images or pictures of any kind in their mosques, lest they be accused of idolatry. In contrast to the Hindu shrine with its lingam, its Ganesh, and Hanuman, its incense-laden air and its din of drum and cymbal, the stillness of the Mohammedan mosque is a joyous revelation of human devotion devoid of human crudities.

"No priests here, plying their trade and collecting their fees, no images, no incense, nothing to stand between the worshiper and the invisible God. Here, as is so often the case, the architecture itself typifies the religion which it enshrines. The plan of a mosque

is severely simple. No inner and mysterious room, no idol shrine, no subordinate deities circling the central god,-- No pantheon of gods with their wives, no semi-divine Tirthankaras, no avataras, no incarnations, no abstruse philosophy which only the wise and learned can comprehend -- just the One God who made all things and does whatever is done, omnipotent, omniscient, merciful, and righteous; a heaven for the good and a hell for the evil, and a perfectly authoritative book, as simple as it is infallible, revealed by God to the Prophet -- this is the sum of Islam."¹

Fatalism is usually regarded by missionaries as an unmitigated evil, but is that necessarily true? There is a positive element in fatalism which bespeaks an implicit faith in God. If this were rationalized, one might say it is comparable to a faith in Law and Order which has been personalized into a conception of Allah. If this fatalism were permeated by a spirit of service and self-sacrifice, as we suggested in the case of the doctrine of Karma, the result might be a firm faith in God, strengthened by service to mankind. The meaning of service (not in its Rotarian smugness!) must grip the heart of the Moslem world as well as the soul of India.

In The Vital Forces of Christianity and Islam (studies by missionaries to Moslems) all the writers

¹

Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 291.

emphasize, in addition to the faith in one God, the personal loyalty of Moslems to their prophet. This intense devotion is in danger of breaking because the true character of Mohammed is being brought to light, and he cannot stand the test of moral standards by which he is being judged. But this capacity for loyalty to a personal leader is of great potential value provided the object of their loyalty is a worthy figure.

The ideal of Moslem ethics is the Aristotelian "temperance" or middle path. And there is much to commend in this attitude. Excesses and extremes are thereby avoided, and a life of moderation is achieved. The chief commendable regulation of Islam is the prohibition of the use of intoxicating liquors. The West stands in a fair way to ruin this tradition by its importation of fiery beverages.

Though I cannot lay my finger on any other virtue, I do feel that there is an ethical virility in Islam which will make its adherents able to stand and walk upright once they have rid themselves of the shackles of tradition.

Religions might be classified as non-missionary -- Judaism, Hinduism, etc. -- and missionary -- Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. The missionary fervor of the Moslems has already been noted. In Africa at the present time converts are being gained to Islam more rapidly than

to Christianity. This is due in part to the fact that African Islam, with its superstitions and animistic tendencies, is nearer to the African's tribal worship. But when every one considers himself as a propagator of the faith he is eager to acquire divine merit by "converting the heathen." In India besides the "movements for the religious education of the young, something is being done by means of itinerant preachers to rekindle the light of truer Islam among nominal Mohammedans; and even to spread the faith of the Prophet among the lower strata of Hindu society.....a considerable amount of proselyting is undoubtedly going on, especially among the low-caste Hindus who find the same improvement in their social condition by embracing Islam that often prompts them to accept Christianity. And it should be added that with this social improvement goes a very real moral and religious advance. In view of this fact it is often astonishing to note the hostility manifested by Christian missionaries and other Christians toward this Moslem movement."¹

I know of no more conclusive argument against the theory that race prejudice is "natural" or "innate" than the evidence of Islamic brotherhood. The democracy within Islam is the most complete that the world has known, with no lines of race, color, or wealth. Such a statement must always be qualified by admitting

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Pratt, India and Its Faiths, pp. 307-309.

the prejudice against others of another faith. But if the West could convince Islam that religious differences should not create impenetrable barriers, and if the East could teach us what she has learned about brotherly love, we should then have an ideal combination. "Islamic fraternity as a unifying factor is a real thing, and beyond all other things in Islam gives occasion for meditation and thought to all Christians, and especially to those who might be inclined to stress Christian individualism at the expense of dwelling together in unity."¹

Section 5. A FORECAST.

In the preceeding pages I have given rather a rosy picture of the religions under consideration, and I would not have anyone think that I am blind to the faults of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, as well as to those of Christianity. But one can glean plenty concerning the negative side of these religions by listening to some missionary talks or by reading Mother India and such volumes. What Miss Mayo has written may be woefully true in many cases, yet the contribution she has made toward respect for India and her fine achievements in the realm of the spirit is more than negligible. Mahatma Gandhi is reported as saying, however, that the

¹

Gairdner, Christianity and Islam, p. 15.

book has served to arouse India to a consciousness of the evils which are sucking her life blood, and she is afire to remedy them. Gandhi's statement is an instance of "turning the other cheek."

In the three religions studied, as well as in Christianity, we are aware of several common elements. These are: a God (or gods), or some sort of Ruling Force which may be considered as supreme; some human manifestation (or incarnation) of this Spirit; and finally some method or way of "salvation." These constantly recurring elements are a testimony to the universal search for God as revealed in or by some human form, through whose help man may maintain a higher level of life. In addition to the three principles noted, I believe that Christianity has two other contributions which are essential to a universal religion.¹ In the historic and divine Jesus Christ we have a dynamic and compelling incarnation of God; -- a greater power unto salvation than Krishna, Buddha, or Mohammed. And we have the Social Gospel of this Jesus Christ which must serve as guiding principle if the future civilizations of mankind are to avoid self-destruction.

What, then, is the task of the missionary? Most contributors to Christian missions would say "to gain converts"; in the pursuit of these precious converts, philanthropic enterprises are justified, but not otherwise.

¹

I hesitate to be dogmatic, but the limitations of space and time prevent the development of these points.

I protest. To me the privilege of the Christian missionary is to become one with the people whom he is amongst, in a spirit of loving service. If his life commands the respect and attention of his comrades, they will seek to know the secret of his power. His task, then, is to so live that he may glorify his Father who is in Heaven. In other words, the task of the missionary is not essentially different than that of any Christian, except that he has chosen a different field in which to live and work, for the division between "home" and "foreign" is fast disappearing.

From the standpoint of the missionary's own attitude, what position should he take toward the faith of the people he is dealing with? There are almost as many approaches to this subject as there are individual missionaries. The most fatal attitudes are those of indiscriminating destructive criticism and an inviolable belief in the sanctity and superiority of one's own faith. He has written his own doom who believes only in the blackness of the heathen's soul and the whiteness of his own.

There are those who preach the doctrine of adaptation and compromise. Dean Inge has said that perhaps it makes no real difference to God whether he is worshipped as Amida or Christ. It makes no difference if to the Japanese Amida is reinterpreted so that it

means the same as Jesus Christ does to those who love him best. But such a thing is well-nigh impossible, for Amida is but a mythical, though powerful, symbol; and Jesus is a historic figure. A study of the history of Christian missions brings to light two noteworthy attempts to interpret Christianity in terms of the existing thought-patterns of the people. The early Nestorians in China¹ presented Christianity in symbols of Buddhism and Taoism with which the Chinese were already familiar. "These adaptations of the Christian faith do not manifest compromise but an earnest desire to propagate a religion which fills the needs of the people by giving dynamic content to familiar ideas."²

Far less commendable were the Jesuit Missions in India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The compromises and deceptions of Robert de Nobile and his successors built up a system of fraud which the Roman Church finally had to condemn, for the true sincerity of Christianity was being crushed under the weight of Hindu customs.³

No, a spirit of compromise and adaptation is not what the missionary should adopt. Let him tell the

1

Seventh century A. D., traced through discovery of Nestorian Tablet in 1620 A. D.

2

Conclusions from study on "Nestorian Monument."

3

Nobile renounced any association with "the West" and called himself a high-caste Brahmin.

Hindu, the Buddhist, or the Moslem, to keep in his life those elements of his religion (such as we have noted) which are of help to him in meeting the demands of life. But let him also proclaim Jesus Christ and His Spirit of Sacrificial Love as the Fulfillment of man's search for a Saviour. "I can conceive," writes Dr. Pratt, "of a Burmese village in which Buddha might still be honored and loved, but which had caught some of the spirit of a still greater Teacher, whose message was more simple than Buddha's, whose insight into the secrets of the spirit was certainly no less deep, whose example was no less inspiring, and who taught the Great Peace, and pointed out to it, as I believe, a more excellent way."¹

Let us close with a testimony from Dr. Y. Y. Tsu, a Chinese Christian: "Believing that a fuller revelation of truth has come through Christ, ours is not to withhold the light we have received but to share it with all. Too often Christian evangelization is conceived in terms of the destruction and displacement of other faiths, whereas a more truthful way would be to think of it as the fulfillment of all that is best and noblest that has been conceived and created by the human spirit."²

¹ Pratt, India and Its Faiths, p. 424.

² Tsu, China Her Own Interpreter, p. 67.

APPENDIX

The following are the questions sent out to the writers of the Vital Forces in Christianity and Islam.¹ They seemed to me so pertinent in the study of a topic such as mine that I am including them with the suggestion that they are valuable in estimating any religion.

"1. In your contact with Moslems, what have you found to be the elements in their faith which are really vital; i. e., which are genuinely prized as a religious help and consolation, or which tend to influence character and conduct?

"2. Have you, on the other hand, found in individuals any dissatisfaction with their faith on specific points?

"3. Which elements in the Christian Gospel and the Christian life have you found to possess the greatest power of appeal?

"4. Which elements in Christianity awaken most opposition or create most difficulty?

"5. What elements in Islam present points of contact with Christianity, and may be used by the teacher as a foundation on which to build?

"6. Has your contact with Moslems shed any fresh light on the New Testament, or enlarged or altered your understanding of what is most vital and essential in the Christian faith?"

1

Zwemer, Introduction to Vital Forces in Christianity and Islam, p. 3.

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